

*Gaining Ground: finding room for political compromise in the research of James Heckman and Charles Murray*

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*I. Introduction*

Cognitive ability has long been emphasized as an important trait in the evaluation of the strength of education programs and the psychological health of communities in the United States. As the economy continues to evolve toward specialization in the tertiary sector, the importance of cognitive ability in American life only magnifies.<sup>1</sup> Among academics, the nature, malleability, and importance of cognitive ability are some of the most contentious issues permeating education and broader social policy debates in America. While the political divide on these issues is immense, it is my contention that common ground for compromise exists between

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in a 1993 interview, Bill Gates illustrated the growing importance of IQ in the American economy:

Software is an IQ business. Microsoft must win the IQ war, or we won't have a future. I don't worry about Lotus or IBM, because the smartest guys would rather come to work for Microsoft. Our competitors for IQ are investment banks such as Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley.  
*Quoted in "Talent Wars", Forbes, 2005 (<http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2005/1031/045.html>)*

each side of the debate on both education and broader social policy issues. This common ground for compromise can be found in an analysis of the evolution of the research of James Heckman and Charles Murray.

The publication of Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's 1994 best-seller, *The Bell Curve*, served for many as a watershed moment in the education policy debate that ushered in the controversial emphasis on cognitive ability in contemporary education philosophy.<sup>2</sup> *The Bell Curve* generated a heated dialog in which it seemed nearly everyone, including the current President of the United States, participated.<sup>3</sup> In reality, Herrnstein and Murray's book was less novel than many of its critics realized, because it merely built upon existing research that, while controversial among academics, never received the public attention afforded to *The Bell Curve*.<sup>4</sup>

Much of the controversy surrounding *The Bell Curve* focused on the relatively short sections in the book dealing with race, in which Herrnstein and Murray claimed to have discovered evidence of a substantial heritable component to IQ that varied among races. Following from their observations was the conclusion that most social and educational programs were doomed to fail, because environmental interventions could not, by definition, change what was determined by a person's ancestry.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, (New York, 1994). Although *The Bell Curve* was coauthored, this article will focus exclusively on the subsequent work of Charles Murray because Richard Herrnstein died shortly after the publication of *The Bell Curve*.

<sup>3</sup> In 1994, Barack Obama delivered a speech on NPR dismissing the hereditarian conclusions of *The Bell Curve* and Charles Murray as racist. ([http://pd.npr.org/anon.npr-mp3/npr/specials/2009/02/20090224\\_specials\\_obamabellcurve.mp3](http://pd.npr.org/anon.npr-mp3/npr/specials/2009/02/20090224_specials_obamabellcurve.mp3))

<sup>4</sup> See e.g., "How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?", Arthur R. Jensen, *Harvard Educational Review* vol. 39 number 1, 1-123, (1969); *IQ and Meritocracy*, Richard J. Herrnstein, (1973).

Retrospectively, many of the published negative reactions to *The Bell Curve* appear extreme, and seem to excessively rely on pathos to drive their arguments. James Heckman, who for many represents the opposing position on the issues in *The Bell Curve*, and whose 1995 review "Cracked Bell" was widely hailed as a devastating critique of *The Bell Curve*, offered a similar observation at the outset of his famous review:

The early reactions to the book in the popular press have been emotional and denunciatory, focusing almost exclusively on the authors' discussion of racial differences and the genetic basis for those differences. This is unfortunate. The book is not devoted exclusively to a discussion of racial differences, although it certainly considers them in detail. It is obvious that most reviewers of the book have not read it as a whole, if they have read it at all.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of this favorable defense, Heckman was nevertheless highly critical of Murray's contentious conclusions concerning the heritability of cognitive skill and the prospects for improving intelligence through government intervention. These criticisms pointed to an irreconcilable divide between Heckman and Murray on core issues, which left little or no room for practical compromise on education policy.

However, in the intervening decades since the publication of *The Bell Curve*, the views of both Heckman and Murray have evolved in significant ways so that for the first time there appears to be significant room for agreement and compromise on policy between the two authors. While it is perhaps somewhat inaccurate to use Heckman and Murray as archetypal representatives of the left and right wings of the education policy debate, the influence of each author on mainstream partisan

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<sup>5</sup> James Heckman, "Cracked Bell", (<http://reason.com/archives/1995/03/01/cracked-bell>). The substance of Heckman's review will be treated below.

positions is so pervasive that it would be imprudent not to search for reasonable compromise in their academic work and policy recommendations.<sup>6</sup>

On the one hand, Heckman has in many instances reversed positions that he initially adopted in his critical review of *The Bell Curve*, and on the other Murray has softened some of his convictions concerning the socioeconomic importance of cognitive ability in American life. Although Heckman and Murray appear to be moving in the same direction on a core set of educational and broader social issues, the looming possibility of compromise has not been addressed by either author, likely because they are approaching similar issues from the (apparently) opposite positions of classical moral philosophy and modern efficiency economics.

Owing to the scope and nature of this article, the treatment of the content and arguments herein will occur on a conceptual rather than quantitative level. The humble purpose here is merely to demonstrate the existence of a basis for a cautious *rapprochement* between opposing camps on contentious issues surrounding education and social policy, in order to discourage the partisan cocooning that is leading America toward the type of stratification in education that both Murray and Heckman would agree is detrimental to the American way of life. Such a compromise will, to be sure, require concessions on principles essential to the right and left sides of the political spectrum, but this is the definition of compromise

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<sup>6</sup> In his Foreword to Murray's 1999 book *The Happiness of the People*, Christopher DeMuth writes:

Charles Murray is not a conservative. He is an old-fashioned, heart-on-the-sleeve, do-gooder liberal. He is happy – I sometimes think eager – to upend the established order of things to help the poor, downtrodden, and unfortunate, and to dethrone the comfortable, smug, and well-fed.  
*The Happiness of the People*, Charles Murray, Washington D.C., (2009).

required by the American political system, for which the indignity of giving ground in a moral argument must be endured for the greater good.

## *II. Gloss on IQ, race, and the nature vs. nurture debate*

Before delving into the scholarship and research of Murray and Heckman, a gloss on IQ and the nature-nurture debate is appropriate for the purpose of clarity. This section may be skipped by readers who are already steeped in the scientific literature on general intelligence, heritability, and race. However, it should be kept in mind that a firm conceptual grasp of the nature-nurture debate is necessary to understand the common ground between Heckman and Murray on education policy. Indeed, the primary purpose of this section is to show that social and educational policies are not necessarily determined by empirical positions in the IQ and heritability debates.

IQ tests purport to measure, among other traits, general intelligence or what is now identified with psychometric *g*: a general factor that accounts for positive correlations between scores on different types of tests that evaluate a diverse array of mental abilities, including verbal, mathematical-logical, and spatial reasoning.<sup>7</sup> The *g* factor implies that how an individual performs on one type of mental test can often predict how that same individual will score on other types of mental tests.

For hereditarians – nature-ists in the nature-nurture debate – the *g* factor represents the innate side of intelligence, that is, the genetic part of intelligence,

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<sup>7</sup> See, *The g Factor: The Science of Mental Ability*, Arthur Jensen, (Westport, 1998). (presenting evidence for the reality of *g*).

which substantially (but not wholly) determines an individual's scores on different types of IQ tests. Stated differently, general intelligence is, for hereditarians, a heritable biological trait encompassing all of the abilities tested by the different types of IQ tests, which determines, up to a certain point, how a person will score on those tests. While the predictive value of *g* is widely assumed by academics in America, plenty of controversy abounds concerning the identification of innate intelligence with *g*.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, environmentalists, or nurture-ists, believe either that genetics plays no part, or at most has a trivial effect in the determination of IQ. The opposition between nature and nurture formed the basis of the infamous debates that percolated throughout society, government, and academia, and undergirded the so-called gender and science wars of the '80s and '90s.<sup>9</sup> These debates have not, however, abated, as evidenced by the ongoing controversy surrounding intelligence testing.

Although many equate the hereditarian position with racism, only a subgroup of hereditarians, including Murray, believe that the genetic part of IQ (genotypic IQ)

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<sup>8</sup> In response to the publication of *The Bell Curve*, the American Psychological Association commissioned a report on the science of intelligence testing, which ultimately acknowledged the predictive value of IQ tests and concluded that the *g* factor was likely not a statistical artifact. "Intelligence: Knowns and Unknowns", Neisser, Ulric et. Al., *American Psychologist*, v51 n2 p77-101, ( 1996). Many academics still dispute the identification of the concept of intelligence with IQ, and a minority of scientists maintain that the *g* factor is a statistical "myth" or artifact. See e.g., *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons in Theory and Practice*, Howard Gardener, (2006) (arguing that there are multiple non-correlating intelligences); "g, a Statistical Myth", Cosma Shalizi, (<http://vserver1.cscs.lsa.umich.edu/~crshalizi/weblog/523.html>) (arguing that *g* is a statistical myth). It is not the purpose of this article to evaluate these disputes.

<sup>9</sup> The gender and science wars on campus focused on several issues, including heritable differences between the sexes, and the accuracy of evolutionary explanations of human cognitive-behavioral differences. See, e.g., *Feminism: Past and Present*, Camille Paglia, (<http://www.bu.edu/arion/files/2010/03/Feminism-Paglia1.pdf>) (Paglia describes being ostracized by other feminists for claiming that hormonal differences between the sexes were real).

varies among races in a way that explains the oft-observed, allegedly permanent racial differences in IQ.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the environmentalist critics of this position, many academics, from philosophers to molecular biologists, have questioned the coherence of the concept of race itself.<sup>11</sup> While this dispute has not been resolved, this paper will, unless necessary to provide context, refer to the concept of race by the more neutral label “population”, and use “population” to denote a broader range of groups that differ from other groups in terms of IQ and socioeconomic status.

Individuals on both sides of the debate, including the current President, have further argued that adopting the hereditarian hypothesis forecloses the possibility of closing the IQ gap or remedying socioeconomic inequality. The necessary implication for these sometimes imprudent commentators is that all hereditarians have a specifically right wing or libertarian political orientation. But this is far from being the case. Discussions of IQ can be excessively dogmatic and cloistered, so that arguments denying or affirming hereditarianism or environmentalism on a broad, conceptual level immediately elicit knee-jerk judgments that lack the nuance

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<sup>10</sup> *Supra*, note 1; *See also*, “The magnitude and components of change in the black white IQ difference from 1920 to 1991: A birth cohort analysis of the Woodcock–Johnson standardizations”, Charles Murray, *Intelligence* 35, 305 (2006) (arguing that the black-white IQ gap has remained relatively constant since 1920); “Black Americans reduce the racial IQ gap: Evidence from standardization samples”, W.T. Dickens and J.T. Flynn, *Psychological Science* 17, 913. (2006). (arguing that the black-white IQ gap has narrowed 3 to 6 points since 1972).

<sup>11</sup> Some philosophers have questioned the ontological status of “race”, that is, questioned whether races really exist. *See e.g.*, “Does ‘race’ have a future?”, Philip Kitcher, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 35, 4 (2007) (arguing, *inter alia*, that there isn’t a single ancestral genetic basis for the groups of physical traits generally associated with race). While other philosophers argue that such dismissals are incorrect. *See*, “Race: a social destruction of a biological concept”, Neven Sesardic, *Biology and Philosophy*, 25, 143, (2010) (addressing numerous race-denial arguments and concluding that the calls to dismiss race as a useful biological concept are premature). Molecular biologists have also argued against the reality of race. *See*, “The Apportionment of Human Diversity”, Richard Lewontin, *Evolutionary Biology* 6, 391, (1972) (arguing that races do not exist because most of the genetic variation in humans exists within, rather than between, groups traditionally defined as races). As with philosophers, there are dissenting scientists. *See*, “Human genetic diversity: Lewontin’s fallacy”, Anthony Edwards, *BioEssays* 25, 798, (2003) (arguing that Lewontin failed to address the fact that racial differences are polygenic and that genetic differences between races are hidden in the correlation structure of genomes).

necessary to address the complexities of the topic. One of the best ways to initiate the type of compromise proposed in this article is to acknowledge this fundamental point.

In order to illustrate this proposition, I will offer an example revisionist defense of the hereditarian position. For hereditarians, it is by no means certain that population-specific genotypic IQ differences necessitate gross population-specific inequality in quality of life. For example, if IQ is a polygenic trait analogous to height in humans, it could be possible to raise mean IQ scores by changing environmental variables in a manner similar to the way nutrition has increased mean height over the last century. Notwithstanding heritable IQ variation, then, the life outcomes of lower-IQ populations could be dramatically improved through the elevation of phenotypic IQ.<sup>12</sup>

Another possibility is that IQ partially measures innate abilities that confer advantages in highly specialized socio-economic environments, but fail to do so in different environments where low-genotypic IQ populations excel. Murray touches upon this point in his most recent book by explaining the effect of America's transition from a secondary to a tertiary sector economy, which eliminated the competitive advantage of low- or average-IQ populations in the economy and destroyed their ability to command high wages.<sup>13</sup> From a hereditarian's

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<sup>12</sup> For instance, even if a substantial portion of the variation in IQ is genetic, it could be possible that low average IQ in one location, e.g. Africa, primarily has an environmental origin, like *in utero* immune system and brain development tradeoffs caused by the prevalence of pathogens such as malaria. See, "Parasite prevalence and the worldwide distribution of cognitive ability", Christopher Eppig et. Al., *Proceedings of the Royal Society – Biological Sciences*, published online, (2010) (arguing that infectious disease is the most powerful predictor of national IQ and that pathogens affect IQ development *in utero* and after an individual has been born (ontogenically)).

<sup>13</sup> *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010*, Charles Murray, New York, 2012.



perspective, it may be possible to ameliorate this problem by implementing programs that traverse the political spectrum, such as restricting the economic forces that favor service specialization in America, like labor equilibrium with the third world through immigration and outsourcing policies. While Murray would probably be averse to such a proposal, the example illustrates the absence of a necessary relationship between hereditarianism and policies that are traditionally labeled “right wing” in America.

This basic assumption, that one’s position on the nature-nurture debate does not compel by necessity certain policy positions, is a core premise in the argument that there is room for compromise to be found in the research of Heckman and Murray.

### *III. Coming together: the evolving positions of Heckman and Murray*

The following sections attempt to sketch a schematic overview of the scholarship of both authors, with special emphasis placed on the way each author’s position has evolved. Neither sketch is intended to be comprehensive because each author publishes on a broad range of subjects, and education and childhood development-related issues are the focus of this article. Accordingly, many (but perhaps not all) omissions in each sketch will be intentional.

#### *A. James Heckman*

Among Heckman’s many conceptual criticisms of *The Bell Curve* (the technical criticisms are not considered here), only a few themes appear to have survived the

evolution of Heckman's thought since 1994. For instance, in his review "Cracked Bell", Heckman suggested that some of the data in *The Bell Curve* demonstrated that education "produced IQ", but Heckman's own subsequent research has demonstrated otherwise.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Heckman has backed away almost entirely from the conclusion that formal education can provide anything beyond temporary increases in IQ, which is not to say, however, that he believes that IQ cannot be permanently increased by some type of environmental intervention.<sup>15</sup>

Heckman also claimed that a key shortcoming of *The Bell Curve* was Hernstein and Murray's failure to provide adequate measurement of the impact of environmental variables on the cognitive ability of young adults, particularly with respect to information about family income.<sup>16</sup> While Heckman continues to promote the general criticism that the environmental analyses were inadequate, his own research has led him to agree with Hernstein and Murray's conclusion that family income is less important than other factors in determining a child's life outcome.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast, Heckman's criticism of Herstenin and Murray's pessimism about the effect of early childhood intervention on quality of life has not abated.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Heckman has continuously argued for the importance of early childhood intervention since asserting in his review that "[e]conomic efficiency is promoted by

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<sup>14</sup> *Supra* note 5, at 3. The specifics of Heckman's research is discussed below.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., "The Economics of Inequality", James Heckman, *American Educator*, 34, (2011) (acknowledging that the Perry Preschool program did not provide lasting IQ gains); In a 2013 annual meeting of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce, Heckman was quoted as stating that schooling "neither increases nor reduces" cognitive performance. Quoted in "Investment in Education May be Misdirected", Eduardo Porter, *The New York Times*, ([http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/03/business/studies-highlight-benefits-of-early-education.html?src=rechp&\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/03/business/studies-highlight-benefits-of-early-education.html?src=rechp&_r=1&))

<sup>16</sup> *Supra* note 5, at 3. [cracked bell cite].

<sup>17</sup> *Supra* note 15, "The Economics of Inequality", at 33.

<sup>18</sup> *Supra* note 5, at 4.

investing in the young.”<sup>19</sup> Heckman’s subsequent research has shown that inequality in what he calls “early childhood experiences” leads to inequality in “adult success”.<sup>20</sup> However, Heckman’s focus here is no longer on the improvement of general intelligence through early childhood intervention, but rather through the improvement of what he describes as personality traits, which are, under normal circumstances, to be inculcated through proper parenting.<sup>21</sup>

Heckman’s contemporary approach to this issue appears to be in broad agreement with the implications of hereditarianism. “Adverse impacts of genetic, parental, and environmental resources”, Heckman maintains, “can be overturned through investments in ... early childhood education.”<sup>22</sup> This perspective has led Heckman to develop a Rawlsian view of human development, whereby the birth of individual humans is understood in terms of winning or losing a lottery that distributes genetic and environmental advantages and disadvantages.<sup>23</sup> Heckman argues that while we are, in all likelihood, unable to alter the genetic results of the lottery, we can alter the environmental results by improving other variables that affect childhood development.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Supra* note 15, “The Economics of Inequality”, at 32.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 33. *See also*, James Heckman and Yona Rubinstein, “The Importance of Noncognitive Skills: Lessons from the GED Testing Program”, *American Economics Review*, vol. 103 number 2., (2013); Flavio Cunha and James Heckman, “The Technology of Skill Formation”, *American Economics Review*, vol. 97 number 2, (2007).

<sup>22</sup> *Supra* note 15, “The Economics of Inequality”, at 34.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* John Rawls was a 20<sup>th</sup> century ethical philosopher who argued that humans ought to structure society based on a thought experiment in which an individual would have to structure society without knowing the social status, assets, or genetic abilities they would possess after the society had been structured. *See, A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls, Massachusetts, (1971).

<sup>24</sup> *Supra* note 15, “The Economics of Inequality”, at 34.

For example, Heckman emphasizes the benefits of being born into and living in intact family units, as opposed to broken families or “never-married single” mother households, by presenting data showing the levels of parental emotional investment in children in each household type.<sup>25</sup> According to Heckman, high-quality parenting is so important that “[a]n economically advantaged child exposed to low-quality parenting is more disadvantaged than an economically disadvantaged child exposed to high-quality parenting.”<sup>26</sup> Such parenting is the basis of the “quality early learning” that can enable all children, regardless of their original position determined by lottery, to enjoy success and a high quality life.<sup>27</sup>

The substance of this education consists in providing a child, from birth until the age of 5, with an array of cognitive and character “skills”.<sup>28</sup> The members of the array vary from paper to paper and tend to overlap, but generally focus on what Heckman labels perseverance, motivation, self-esteem, self-control, conscientiousness, trustworthiness, and forward-thinking behavior.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, while acknowledging that cognitive ability has a substantial genetic component predictive of “schooling, wages, health, participation in crime, and success in many facets of life”, Heckman nevertheless emphasizes that the array of skills have similar predictive value, which, taken in aggregate, have superior predictive power over IQ alone.<sup>30</sup> For example, while Heckman’s research has

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<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> *Supra* note 5, “The Economics of Inequality”.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Id.* at 33.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.* and *Supra* note 21.

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

shown that IQ is a superior predictor of job performance than the array of skills, it has also shown that the skills are a more stable predictor, because the importance of IQ is magnified in more technical and specialized jobs.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the traits are often the strongest predictors of performance in most jobs, excluding those positions that require extremely high IQ. Thus, while the Perry Preschool intervention project did not boost IQs in the treatment group over those of the control group, it dramatically improved the overall socioeconomic success of the treatment group over the control group by teaching core non-cognitive personality traits to the treatment group.<sup>32</sup> Consistent with this finding was Heckman's research on GED scores, which showed that individuals with GEDs had less economic success than high school graduates. The GED, Heckman argues, adequately measures cognitive ability, but fails to measure character ability in the way that going through a full high school curriculum and graduating does.<sup>33</sup>

Before discussing Heckman's proposals to address this issue, it is important to consider his criticism of Hernstein and Murray's own policy suggestions in *The Bell Curve*. Heckman notes that *The Bell Curve* concludes in an excessively vague appeal to a form of small-scale communitarianism, in which neighborhoods are cognitively diverse, small, and perform several communal functions, including parenting and the inculcation of virtues.<sup>34</sup> According to Heckman, the proposal is

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<sup>31</sup> Lex Borghans, Angela Lee Duckworth, James Heckman, and Baster Weel, "The Economics and Psychology of Personality Traits", *Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 43, 44. (2008)

<sup>32</sup> *Supra* note 31 at 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Supra* note 21, "The Importance of Noncognitive Skills: Lessons from the GED Testing Program".

<sup>34</sup> *Supra* note 5 at 4.

impractical, “cries out for clarification”, and lacks empirical support.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, Heckman is critical of *The Bell Curve’s* arguments that government spending on and intervention in the inequality documented in the book has failed, and is doomed to fail in the future.<sup>36</sup>

For Heckman, a more appropriate approach than the vague, philosophical conclusion of *The Bell Curve* would be to focus on promoting “economic efficiency” by taking practical steps to ameliorate the negative economic consequences of the inequality documented in *The Bell Curve*.<sup>37</sup>

As an economist, Heckman’s emphasis on economic efficiency in addressing educational policy has not changed since the publication of his review. Unlike Murray, Heckman claims that his interest in educational equity and proposed solutions are premised more on the goal of promoting economic efficiency than pursuing noble or moral ends.<sup>38</sup> For instance, Heckman argues that the absence of IQ changes in the Perry study and the related Abecedarian study is overshadowed by the substantial economic returns produced through the benefits provided to the treatment groups.<sup>39</sup> Thus, rather than agreeing with Herrnstein and Murray that the reality of genotypic IQ speaks against pursuing government-directed early childhood intervention, Heckman believes that substantial investments should be made “in the foundation of school readiness from birth to age 5” for disadvantaged

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<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Supra*, note 5 at 4. Toward the end of his review of *The Bell Curve*, Heckman claims that “[d]iscussions of nature versus nurture are irrelevant to practical policy discussions couched in terms of costs and benefits.” Elsewhere, he has claimed that the nature versus nurture paradigm “is obsolete”, in part because of his discoveries surrounding the non-cognitive skillset described above. *Supra* note 21, “The Technology of Skill Formation” at 31.

<sup>38</sup> *Supra*, note 15, “The Economics of Inequality” at 34.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

children.<sup>40</sup> In practice, this would mean extensive preschool programs as well as parenting education programs, such as the Nurse-Family Partnership, which “intervenes solely with at-risk first-time mothers during pregnancy, sends nurses to the home regularly for the first two years of a child’s life, and teaches mothering and infant-care skills.”<sup>41</sup> Such programs would help inculcate disadvantaged children with Heckman’s array of character skills and shield them from harmful parenting practices, like alcoholism, tobacco consumption, and other environmental forces that have long-term effects on cognition and socioeconomic health.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, while Heckman seems to have cautiously accepted some of the hereditarian conclusions about cognitive ability endorsed by Hernstein and Murray in *The Bell Curve*, he has nonetheless remained committed to the spirit of his original criticism. Heckman has turned his focus away from disproving the factual premises of Hernstein and Murray’s hereditarian arguments and directed it instead toward the significance of the noncognitive skillset, which, he maintains, is more important than hereditary IQ in determining whether a disadvantaged child will have a successful and fulfilling life. Following from this observation, according to Heckman, is a repudiation of Herstein and Murray’s libertarian pessimism about government intervention in early childhood development, because, from a practical standpoint, such intervention will be more economically efficient than Hernstein and Murray’s vague communitarian solution.

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<sup>40</sup> *Id*

<sup>41</sup> *Id.* at 35.

<sup>42</sup> *Supra* note 5 at 35.

## B. Charles Murray

Murray's position on certain themes has remained relatively constant since the publication of *The Bell Curve*. Murray has always maintained that there is a disconcerting trend in American life leading to a *de facto* cognitive and socioeconomic caste system. In particular, Murray has pointed to the university system's relatively efficient ability to extract individuals with the highest native intelligence from disadvantaged populations and transplant them to secluded elite areas, thereby causing a hereditary "brain drain" from peripheral disadvantaged communities to core centers of commerce, culture, and intellectual activity.<sup>43</sup> In his latest book, *Coming Apart*, Murray marshals a formidable dataset to describe the location and political orientation of these areas, which are centered in what he calls "SuperZips": contiguous, segregated white and Asian neighborhoods surrounding the epicenters of economic and political power that overwhelmingly elect left-leaning Democratic Party politicians.<sup>44</sup>

As a result of this self-imposed elite selection and isolation, disadvantaged populations are deprived of their own elites, who could have used their unique abilities to aid their own disadvantaged communities. Moreover, Murray argues that the concomitant specialization of the American economy has deprived many disadvantaged populations of vocational opportunities, which intensifies the negative socioeconomic effects of America's new intellectual caste system.

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<sup>43</sup> See *supra* note 13.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*



With the exception of certain sections toward the end of the book, *The Bell Curve* focuses almost exclusively on cognitive ability as the underlying and primary cause of America's class segregation. Although Murray's latest scholarship continues to focus on the disconnect between the reality of heritable general intelligence and public policies that operate on the premise that general intelligence is not heritable or does not exist, he has made certain substantive concessions on the question of cognitive ability.

For example, in *Real Education*, Murray cautiously accepts some of Gardener's conclusions about the existence of non-correlating multiple intelligences, with the caveat that most of Gardner's intelligences – musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal – do correlate with psychometric *g*, albeit weakly.<sup>45</sup> Further, Murray makes an unexpected concession worthy of full quotation:

Environment plays a major role in the way that all of the abilities develop. Genes are not even close to being everything. Regarding IQ specifically, a total change in environment -- adoption at birth provides the best evidence -- can produce demonstrable increases in IQ scores. Living in persistent poverty and other kinds of severe socioeconomic disadvantage can depress scores. Furthermore, important evidence has been found for the plasticity of certain mental processes, especially during infancy and early childhood. We have reason to hope that, sometime in the future, technologies for early intervention that produce dramatic and permanent change will be developed.<sup>46</sup>

Murray nevertheless remains skeptical of past intervention strategies and current strategies modeled on the old methods, especially the Perry and Abecedarian preschool projects.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Real Education*, Charles Murray, (2009) at 26. See also *Supra* note 8.

<sup>46</sup> *Supra* note 44 at 49.

<sup>47</sup> *Id.* at 52.

Murray has also brought some of the vague moral concepts from *The Bell Curve* into focus and articulated new philosophical ideas, so that instead of merely admonishing what he calls “educational romantics” for pursuing policies that are costly, destined to fail, and harmful to disadvantaged children, he has also started to offer some cautiously optimistic guidance for improving the quality of life of disadvantaged populations. In particular, he has elaborated a set of virtues or personality traits that are, he maintains, consistent with the views of the Founding Fathers and more important than cognitive ability for a flourishing life.<sup>48</sup> For instance, Murray argues that, in certain instances, interpersonal skills can be more determinative of academic performance than cognitive ability.<sup>49</sup>

Murray attempts to add more substance to the concept of a “flourishing life”, “successful life”, or positive “life outcome” by once again turning to moral philosophy. Specifically, Murray offers his own version of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, agreeing with Aristotle that the goal of life is happiness, and that happiness is identified in turn with “lasting and justified satisfaction with life as a whole”.<sup>50</sup> Achieving such happiness, according to Murray, involves discovering a vocation that one is good at and that one enjoys.<sup>51</sup> Murray agrees with Aristotle that the path to this goal begins with education and habituation into a core set of virtues that prepare an individual for the harsh reality of life.<sup>52</sup> In addition to the cardinal

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<sup>48</sup> *Supra* note 13 part II, chapter 6.

<sup>49</sup> *Supra* note 44 at 51.

<sup>50</sup> *Supra* note 13 at Part III, Chapter 15

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*

Aristotelian virtues, Murray adds the American Founding virtues of industriousness, honesty, marriage, and religiosity.<sup>53</sup>

By “industriousness”, Murray intends to describe the belief that life consists in hard work, striving to get ahead, making life better for oneself and one’s children, and feeling embarrassed about failure.<sup>54</sup> By “honesty”, Murray simply means trustworthiness, and illustrates its importance in American life by describing the statistical increase in crimes of dishonesty in America.<sup>55</sup> By “marriage”, Murray refers to the importance of keeping a family together, eschewing divorce, promoting morality within the marriage, and the exercise of forethought prior to entering into marriage.<sup>56</sup> Finally, “religion” refers to a metaphysical belief system that imbues an individual’s life with meaning and exists as a cultural force to promote virtue and communitarian-altruistic behavior.<sup>57</sup>

Murray argues that all of these virtues were taught together as a civic religion to children until the 1950s and ‘60s, and provides several examples, chief of which were the virtue-promoting McGuffey Readers distributed in American classrooms.<sup>58</sup> The McGuffey readers were widely employed in classrooms throughout America before being withdrawn in the late-60s, and depicted

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<sup>53</sup> *Id.* at Part II, Chapter 6. Incidentally, Murray does not intend “marriage” or “religion” to exclusively denote heterosexual marriage or a single type of religion. See “Charles Murray’s Gay-Marriage Surprise”, Jane Mayer, (2013) (<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2013/03/charles-murrays-gay-marriage-surprise.html>) (Describing Murray’s speech to CPAC entreating Republicans to accept the “reality” of gay marriage).

<sup>54</sup> *Supra* note 13 at Part II, Chapter 6.

<sup>55</sup> *Supra* note 13 at Part II, Chapter 6.

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

communitarian, altruistic, and industrious behavior through elementary reading exercises.

The bulk of Murray's *Coming Apart* consists of documentation purporting to show how these virtues have declined among disadvantaged populations since the early 1960s, and how they have produced extremely negative socioeconomic outcomes. Murray concludes *Coming Apart* with evidence that the prevalence of these virtues among disadvantaged populations is far more important than cognitive ability or even income in the determination of high levels of self-reported happiness.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, although *Coming Apart* is primarily a study of the decline of disadvantaged or lower class white America, Murray nonetheless adds data from non-white populations back into his calculations at the end of the book in order to demonstrate that the set of virtues he identified produced the same levels of self-reported happiness, regardless of population demographics.<sup>60</sup>

For Murray, the most important result of his calculations is that self-reported happiness among populations beholden to his core virtues is the same regardless of socioeconomic class.<sup>61</sup> Murray argues from this observation that the segregated cognitive and economic elite have failed the disadvantaged populations in several key areas. The elite have adopted the core virtues, Murray maintains, while removing them from the public life of the disadvantaged populations that need them the most. Murray points to the decline of media morality, exemplified by the moral production codes once adopted but now neglected by Hollywood, and liberal

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<sup>59</sup> *Id.* part III, chapter 15

<sup>60</sup> *Supra* note 13 part III, chapter 16.

<sup>61</sup> *Id.*

marriage and family political policies, both of which, according to Murray, contributed to the dramatic increase in births to single mothers and households run by a divorced parent.<sup>62</sup> Murray argues, moreover, that economic specialization has made stay-at-home parenting increasingly difficult for disadvantaged populations.<sup>63</sup>

In the context of governance, Murray argues that, because Americans are destined to be ruled by an elite, they ought to be ruled by a moral elite.<sup>64</sup> It is not sufficient for an individual to merely have extraordinary cognitive ability; rather, America's elite must also be told explicitly, forcefully, and repeatedly that "their intellectual talent is a gift that they have done nothing to deserve. They are not superior human beings, but very, very lucky ones. They should feel humbled by their good luck."<sup>65</sup> Such an approach will, in Murray's view, encourage America's ruling class to adopt a more caring attitude toward the rest of the nation.

Murray also demands that the elite reform k-8 schooling so that it includes something like the McGuffey Readers, promotes some sort of virtuous civic religion, and takes a realistic approach to education that focuses on helping students discover their vocation.<sup>66</sup> Murray further suggests that proponents of charter and alternative schools relax their obsession with *g*-loaded standardized test scores and focus on promoting other educational philosophies, like the Core Knowledge

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<sup>62</sup> *Id.* prologue, page 4.

<sup>63</sup> *Id.*

<sup>64</sup> *Supra* note 44 at 107.

<sup>65</sup> *Supra* note 44 at 130.

<sup>66</sup> *Id.* at 148-153.

Foundation, which aims to promote communal cohesion through a common set of social and historical knowledge.<sup>67</sup>

With respect to parenting, the responsibility does not, according to Murray, reside exclusively with the elite. Among disadvantaged populations, parents must start taking responsibility for the development of their children.<sup>68</sup> However, the elite must also promote responsible parenting practices and eschew careless and immoral depictions of family life.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, Murray has called for an ambitious, “\$100 million” study, similar to the Coleman Report, which aims at establishing the “limits of the possible”.<sup>70</sup> Specifically, the purpose of the study would be to determine, conclusively, whether achievement could really be improved among low-ability students, and to determine realistic grade-level academic standards, as opposed to the current standards that many states fail to meet.

Thus, while Murray has remained committed to his pessimism about the prospect of effectively increasing the cognitive ability of children with low genotypic IQ, he has broadened his view of the problem of inequality to include cultural and personality-based causes. Furthermore, Murray has considerably softened his belief that genotypic IQ is paramount in the determination of positive life outcomes for disadvantaged populations, arguing in many cases that a virtuous character is more important than a high IQ in an individual’s pursuit of happiness. He further

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<sup>67</sup> *Id* at 153. See <http://www.coreknowledge.org/>.

<sup>68</sup> *Id* at 166.

<sup>69</sup> *Id* at 162

<sup>70</sup> *Supra* note 44 at 136.

argues that the virtues comprising such a character are beneficial regardless of race or economic class.

In his analysis of the current rise in inequality, Murray argues that America's segregated elites are responsible for the socioeconomic decline of disadvantaged populations, in part because they have failed to promote the Founding and Aristotelian virtues in all aspects of American life. In order to ameliorate the negative consequences of growing inequality in America, Murray calls for a revival of these virtues in American public life as part of a broader educational policy that includes alternative educational philosophies and an extraordinary longitudinal research proposal.

#### *IV. A framework for compromise*

It is important to note at the outset of this section that both Heckman and Murray would likely reject some of the proposals made below; but this should not discourage more practically-minded readers who are influenced by one or the other author's research. Most of the proposals in this section are general and conceptual because much of the education and social policy debates are determined by fundamental differences between political camps, which operate on incommensurable first principles concerning the purpose of government and education. The libertarian or free-market position represented by Murray, which I denote with the label "right" below, prefers to pursue educational change through strictly cultural and private endeavors. The progressive or left-wing position

represented by Heckman prefers, in contrast, to pursue top-down, government-directed and –funded policies in order to ameliorate the problems associated with national education.

These difference should not, however, be allowed to overshadow the substantial agreement between Heckman and Murray. For example, to many on the left, Murray's holistic moral-philosophical proposals may sound like uninteresting and un-rigorous speculation at best, or the ravings of a conservative curmudgeon at worst. But there are far too many parallels with Heckman's proposals, some of which are now seriously being considered at the Federal level, to warrant a flippant dismissal of Murray's position by the left.<sup>71</sup> By that same token, Heckman's proposal for government intervention to develop specific character traits in children could conjure images of Nazi or Soviet attempts at social engineering; but such a response is unproductive and ignores the basis of Heckman's proposals, which is a core concern of the political right: economic efficiency.

Although Murray's proposals are less rigorous than his statistical analyses and Heckman's own proposals, the preceding sections hopefully have shown that they are nonetheless similar to Heckman's position on certain fundamental points. While Heckman maintains that his analyses and proposals are strictly amoral and premised entirely on the prevailing measure of economic efficiency, it is clear that

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<sup>71</sup> President Obama recently called for the allocation of “\$75 billion over the next 10 years to expand public preschool by raising the federal tax on tobacco products.” Lillian Mongeau, “Obama budget would allocate \$75 billion over next decade to preschool”, (<http://www.edsource.org/today/2013/obama-budget-would-allocate-75-billion-over-next-decade-to-preschool/30223>).



the justifications of his proposals are functionally equivalent to those of a moralist, and therefore Charles Murray's own position.<sup>72</sup>

The claim to moral neutrality made through an appeal to economic efficiency is common, especially in the social sciences and law and government, and often allows academics and public officials to sidestep the difficult questions surrounding hereditary cognitive differences between populations. However, this difference between Murray and Heckman is illusory, for Murray regularly suggests the economic benefits that could accrue with the adoption of his moral recommendations, and there certainly are programs that would be more economically efficient than Heckman's proposals, but which few people, including Heckman, would ever propose because of the moral implications of those programs. Therefore, it is a relatively uncontroversial conclusion that both authors share a general set of moral and economic goals.

By extension, the distinction between Murray's core virtues and Heckman's array of "personality" and "character" traits is superficial. In support of this conclusion, a digression on the work of Edward Banfield is salutary.<sup>73</sup> In *Coming Apart*, Murray refers to Banfield's influential first-hand account of an impoverished and, for lack of a better term, anti-social Italian town ensconced within a region of great economic prosperity.<sup>74</sup> Consistent with Murray's moral-cultural approach to describing inequality, Banfield described the town's dysfunction in moral-cultural

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<sup>72</sup> See, *Economic Analysis of Law* (8<sup>th</sup> Ed.), Richard Posner, (2010).

<sup>73</sup> Edward Banfield was a 20<sup>th</sup> century American political scientist.

<sup>74</sup> *Supra* note 13, part II, Chapter 14. *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, Edward Banfield, (1967).

terms.<sup>75</sup> However, in a separate, more famous book, Banfield undertook the task of describing differences between the lower, middle, and upper classes solely in terms of personality or character traits.

In *The Unheavenly City*, Banfield drew on extensive research to arrive at the conclusion that membership in a “class” depended more upon whether an individual shared a "distinct patterning of attitudes, values, and modes of behavior" than whether they possessed a certain income.<sup>76</sup> His research illustrated that beliefs about the importance of planning for the future, sexual and marital morality, altruism, honesty, self-expression, self-esteem, and feelings of powerlessness ranged along a spectrum from the upper to the lower class, with the lower class feeling the most powerless and being the most present-oriented and morally libertine of the classes.<sup>77</sup> This heterogeneity in traits between the classes could best be explained, according to Banfield, in terms of “psychological orientation toward the future.”<sup>78</sup>

Thus, rather than characterizing these differences in terms of moral deficiencies, as Murray has, Banfield took an ostensibly more neutral approach and used labels like “attitude”, “modes of behavior”, and “time orientation”. However, these traits clearly match up with Murray’s posited Founding virtues of industriousness, honesty, marriage, and, to a lesser extent, religiosity. Moreover, Banfield’s neutral approach is identical to Heckman’s, and produced results consistent with

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<sup>75</sup> In his book, Banfield explained the disadvantages of the town in terms of what he called “amoral familism”, an ethos based on the following principle: “[m]aximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise.” *Id.*

<sup>76</sup> *The Unheavenly City Revisited*, Edward Banfield, (1990) (updated republication of *The Unheavenly City*, 1970). Page 56.

<sup>77</sup> *Id.* at 57-62

<sup>78</sup> *Id.* at 57.

Heckman's own analyses, which have revealed that his array of non-cognitive abilities strongly correlate with positive life outcomes, such as high wages and health. Tellingly, Heckman has noted that the non-cognitive ability of "conscientiousness" is "conceptually related to risk aversion, leisure preference, and time preference".<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, Heckman's arguments for the importance of an intact family structure, the importance of trustworthiness, and the benefits of multi-generational familial and communal parenting are mirrored in Murray's emphasis on the virtues of "marriage", "honesty", and "religiosity", as well as his own quantitative work concerning the decline in the importance of each virtue among disadvantaged populations.

Thus, in addition to the apparently cautious and somewhat contentious agreement between Murray and Heckman on genotypic IQ, it is clear that both authors are in broad agreement concerning the importance of specific non-cognitive character traits or virtues in ameliorating the problems of inequality. Murray's argument that the benefits of these traits or virtues accrue to all populations, regardless of demographic composition, demonstrates a further point of agreement. These agreements cannot, of course, completely eclipse their ongoing disagreements concerning the viability of past government approaches to intervention in early

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<sup>79</sup> *Supra* note 31 at 4.

childhood development, but they can provide a conceptual framework for policy compromise by establishing a common set of goals and strategies.<sup>80</sup>

Heckman has already provided one general basis for facilitating compromise by essentially telling policy makers that, one way or another, America will be paying for the early childhood development of disadvantaged children.<sup>81</sup> Data provided by Murray and Heckman support this argument by revealing positive correlations between the absence of the virtues and character traits and criminality, the consumption of public assistance programs, and a host of other negative life outcomes that are costly to the taxpayer. Hence data offered by both Murray and Heckman suggest that policy makers must choose between investing in early childhood development to reduce these costly behaviors in the future, or not invest and nevertheless pay for the long-term consequences.

In the spirit of Heckman's inevitability argument, the right could take stock of the fact that American federalism allows for extensive government intervention in education, and that using that extensive power of intervention as a prophylactic against the imminent economic consequences of a burgeoning lower class could very well eliminate the need for such public expenditures in the future. In light of the framework for agreement provided by Murray's latest scholarship covering the core virtues, participation rather than ideological withdrawal could very well benefit

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<sup>80</sup> In October, 2012, *The Boston Review* hosted a forum in which Heckman presented his most recent findings and argued in favor of early childhood intervention. As one of the official respondents, Murray voiced his agreement with Heckman on the importance of early childhood experiences and efforts to correct inequality, but reiterated his skepticism about the Perry and Abecedarian projects. "Forum: Promoting Social Mobility", James Heckman et. al., *The Boston Review*, ([http://www.bostonreview.net/BR37.5/ndf\\_social\\_mobility\\_early\\_intervention\\_inequality.php](http://www.bostonreview.net/BR37.5/ndf_social_mobility_early_intervention_inequality.php))

<sup>81</sup> *Supra* note 15.

both sides in the long run, and avoid the potentially disastrous consequences of partisan cocooning. Such an approach would be consistent with the broad cultural approach favored by the right.

The research might also suggest, for the right, that withdrawing from public schooling and isolating children in private- or home-schooling environments directly contributes to the elite segregation denounced by Murray for over two decades. While Murray's scholarship shows that the left is substantially guilty of committing the same withdrawal, it is the right that is responsible for promoting withdrawal as a matter of policy; indeed, Murray is, somewhat paradoxically, one of the chief proponents of education privatization and homeschooling.<sup>82</sup> Given the conceptual agreement on education between Murray and Heckman, perhaps it may be worthwhile for the right to concede the inevitability argument and reinvest themselves in the national network of public schools that is projected to be responsible for the moral and academic education of 57 million American children by 2018.<sup>83</sup> Political, social, and economic reinvestment could benefit the right by ensuring the reinstatement of the core Founding virtues into American education, which would, in turn, provide children with the cultural and moral tools to achieve success.

Progressives, for their part, could recognize the implications of Heckman's research: namely, that the type of education promoted by Heckman is, in fact, cultural education, and that a child's educational environment extends far beyond

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<sup>82</sup> See generally *supra* note 45.

<sup>83</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=65>

the narrow confines of educational programs. This recognition would be even more beneficial if the left also took a sober look at Murray's overwhelming data showing the consequences of class segregation and the declining importance of the core virtues, which are functionally identical to the personality traits upheld by Heckman.

In addition to foregoing its own tendency to engage in cultural, economic, and territorial segregation, the left could make efforts to improve the extra-curricular cultural and moral forces that influence children. This would mean in practice that progressives could compromise by agreeing to work toward reversing certain aspects of cultural evolution in America, in particular the development of relatively lax marital standards,<sup>84</sup> the tendency to encourage disadvantaged populations to rely on government assistance,<sup>85</sup> and the general neglect of Murray and Heckman's core character traits in all facets of social life.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> According to the CDC's National Vital Statistics System, the percentage of births to unwed mothers increased by roughly 14% across all populations (excepting Asian-American women). (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vitalstats.htm>.) While marriage is an imperfect proxy for measuring family cohesion (because a nuclear family can exist in the absence of a marriage contract) the numbers nevertheless remain staggering. For example, over 70% of African American births were to unwed mothers in 2008. *Id.* This conclusion is bolstered by the fact that "children born to cohabiting couples are three times more likely to see their parents break up, compared to children born to married parents." Kay Hymowitz, Jason Carroll, W. Bradford Wilcox, Kelleen Kaye, *Knot Yet: The Benefits and Costs of Delayed Marriage in America*, published by the University of Virginia National Marriage Project (<http://nationalmarriageproject.org/reports/>). In light of these numbers and the importance of a cohesive family in providing children with Murray and Heckman's core character traits, the left ought to recognize that the educational program of early childhood intervention extends far beyond the classroom, and, as a consequence, is directly influenced by policies that discourage reliance on a cohesive family unit.

<sup>85</sup> The relationship between the incentives created by government assistance and a decline in Heckman's character trait of "conscientiousness" should be conceptually apparent. As discussed above, Heckman and Murray's data show increased reliance on public assistance among individuals lacking in the core virtues or character traits.

<sup>86</sup> This phenomenon has been documented extensively by scholars spanning the political spectrum. In addition to the data provided by Heckman, Murray, and Banfield discussed above, *see also*, Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster. (2000) (describing the decline of civic involvement, communal cohesion, and social trust in America).

Finally, given relative agreement between Murray and Heckman on the influence of IQ and the core virtues or character traits, both sides of the debate could resolve in a decisive manner how cognitive ability is to be understood by policy makers, so that the standards and guiding philosophy of public education could be best tethered to reality. While Heckman evidently believes in a substantial heritable component to cognitive ability, it is unclear whether he agrees with Murray that variation in genotypic IQ exists between distinct populations. For those who disagree with Heckman and Murray on either issue, the expensive, longitudinal study proposed by Murray could be an acceptable compromise for deciding the issue.

At a minimum, however, the agreement between Murray and Heckman on both variation in heritable cognitive ability and the importance of non-cognitive traits should inspire compromise on a core pressing issue: the viability of programs like the Bush Administration's controversial No Child Left Behind Act and the Obama Administration's Elementary and Secondary Education Act, both of which premise Federal funding of state education programs on the ability of students to match national and international standardized testing standards.<sup>87</sup> If, following Heckman and Murray, heredity determines in any way a student's performance on these tests, and, moreover, if education in the core character traits is, for many students, more important than standardized test performance in the determination of life outcome, both sides of the political spectrum ought to agree on a comprehensive reassessment of national programs designed around standardized test scores.

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<sup>87</sup> See generally <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>.

Finally, those accepting a substantially influential heritable component in general intelligence can, in light of the research offered by Heckman and Murray, take responsibility for the consequences of America's trend toward a comparative advantage in the cognitively demanding tertiary sector and intellectual property. This means these individuals could be encouraged to take on the moral responsibility of actively promoting those non-cognitive traits that can improve the lives of disadvantaged populations in an economy that favors high IQ. If education cannot, because of hereditary limitations, provide every American with the means to find a useful vocation in America's specialized economy, even if they have been inculcated with Heckman's character traits, then substantial government assistance, either in the form of labor restrictions or general welfare, could be contemplated.

Given the agreement between Heckman and Murray on the strong predictive relationship between IQ and employment, hereditarians who believe IQ cannot be significantly improved will have to face the difficult prospect of dealing with a perpetual hereditary underclass in the United States. Confronting such a problem would likely require the adoption of government-directed programs that are traditionally considered anathema to the right.

## *V. Conclusion*

It goes without saying that the subjects treated in this article are extremely controversial and technically complex. These obstacles should not, however,



prevent a sober consideration of the potential political implications of the acceptance of some type of hereditarianism on the one hand, and the results of research covering Heckman's character traits and Murray's core virtues on the other. While the two issues are conceptually distinct, the fact that they complement each other lends a great deal of support to Heckman's conclusion that the nature-nurture paradigm is obsolete.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the primacy of early childhood education into the core virtues or character traits emphasized by Heckman and Murray must be acknowledged, regardless of whether one accepts hereditarianism.

Moreover, the implications of certain hereditarian hypotheses are not nearly as oppressive as some have argued. Rather, hereditarianism may be consistent with efforts to increase phenotypic cognitive ability, and is certainly compatible with the early childhood intervention approach offered by Heckman. The latter observation is, after all, the fundamental premise of Murray's latest approach to education and social inequality. Given the shared common ground between Murray and Heckman on the issues discussed above, it is apparent that a conceptual framework for compromise on the serious empirical questions of heritable cognitive ability and the prospects of early childhood intervention exists.

At a minimum, the common ground to be found between these two authors should suggest that the rigid ideological oppositions that characterized the nature-nurture debate in the past are no longer helpful for practical purposes. An event that occurred during the writing of this article illustrates this point. Jason Richwine, a fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation, was recently forced to

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<sup>88</sup> *Supra* note 37.

resign when it was revealed that his doctoral dissertation at Harvard used regression analysis to demonstrate that the mean IQ score of Latinos was lower than the mean IQ score of non-Latino whites.<sup>89</sup> The public response to the event was predictably unproductive and reminiscent of the reactionary blowback following the publication of the *The Bell Curve*.<sup>90</sup> Hopefully this article has shown that such reactions are at best premature and at worst harmful to free speech and scientific research.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, the question of heritable cognitive ability is, if relevant at all, merely one minor point among many that ought to be considered by both sides of the political spectrum in education policy discussions.

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<sup>89</sup> “Analyst who said immigrants have lower IQ resigns from U.S. conservative group”, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/10/us-usa-immigration-conservatives-idUSBRE94910B20130510>

<sup>90</sup> See e.g. “Dark Heritage”, Bill Keller, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/13/opinion/keller-dark-heritage.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/13/opinion/keller-dark-heritage.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

<sup>91</sup> See e.g. “In Defense of Jason Richwine”, Charles Murray, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/348323/defense-jason-richwine>