



Illinois Wesleyan University
Digital Commons @ IWU

John Wesley Powell Student Research
Conference

2001, 12th Annual JWP Conference

Apr 21st, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

AFQT, *The Bell Curve*, and Future Earning Potential

Amber Munday
Illinois Wesleyan University

Robert Leekley, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc>

Munday, Amber and Leekley, Faculty Advisor, Robert, "AFQT, *The Bell Curve*, and Future Earning Potential" (2001). *John Wesley Powell Student Research Conference*. 3.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc/2001/oralpres/3>

This Event is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Oral Presentation 1.3

AFQT, THE BELL CURVE, AND FUTURE EARNING POTENTIAL

Amber Munday and Robert Leekley*

Department of Economics, Illinois Wesleyan University

“The average black and white differ in IQ at every level of socioeconomic status...” state Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray in 1994’s controversial book, The Bell Curve (269). Implicit in this statement is the idea that blacks are genetically less intelligent than whites, and it is because of this, that the gap in black and white median incomes persists. Herrnstein and Murray believe that the portion of IQ, as measured by the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), that is influenced by environmental factors is virtually irrelevant. This is due to the fact that less intelligent people live in less desirable environments because of their lower earning potential.

My research provides a more optimistic conclusion regarding the future earnings potential of the youth of the disadvantaged. Regression analysis shows that AFQT scores are, in fact, dependent on neighborhood characteristics, especially measures of school quality. The data also show that poor neighborhood conditions affect whites as well as blacks. The resulting implications suggest that the racial divergence in AFQT scores, and the future earnings that they predict, could be the culminating result of the years of segregation of blacks into areas with poorer neighborhood conditions, rather than a function of some genetic difference. Policy implications of this research support the need to equalize public schools and other neighborhood conditions in order to provide equal opportunities for all.