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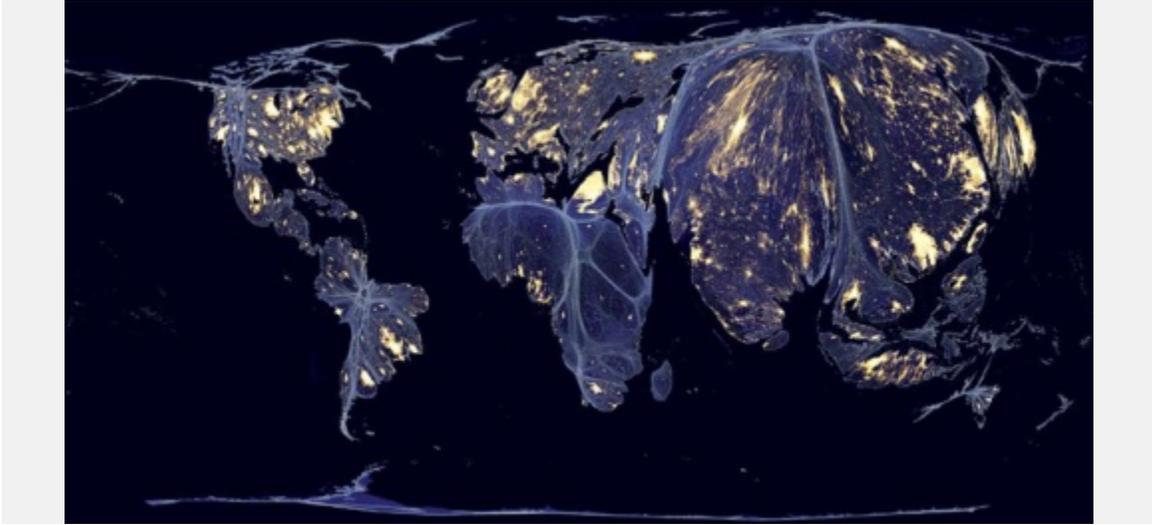
8 billion by the quarter century (2025)

by **DANNY DORLING** Aug 2, 2013



Photo: The Crowds from Marc Forrest's Flickr Photostream

As inequalities in income and wealth within the USA and the UK increase, it is hardly surprising that those currently at the top would like to avoid having to realize that they are creating an even more unequal world in which many of their own grandchildren and great-grandchildren are likely to flounder. It is far more comforting for many at the top to believe that they are specially able, and that if they find thinking hard, then the common people below them must find it all the more difficult. It is also comforting for them to believe they are doing good for all when they channel their genetically well-endowed offspring into a few select educational institutions. The problem is that the best research we have tells us that they are wrong.



Here the planet is drawn so that each of its 7 billion people is given equal representation. This is a global gridded population created by cartographer Ben Hennig. The NASA image of the earth at night taken in December 2012 is draped over it. Where it is darkest people have the least electricity, or are less prone to waste what they have by shining it up into the sky. See: http://www.viewsoftheworld.net/?page_id=631y

In 2011, the popular scientific press reported studies which, if naively interpreted, appeared to suggest that **‘about half of intelligence differences between individuals can be attributed to genetics – specifically, the sum of many small effects from hundreds or even thousands of genes’**. These results, however, say something very different when properly interpreted, even when interpreted by those who view intelligence to be a little heritable rather than being, say, the product of living in a time after Gregor Mendel had made discoveries about the sex lives of peas.

So, even if a little of the quirks of mental ability are inherited, we now know that: ‘molecular genetics suggests that a myriad of Mendelian influences of individually tiny effect contribute to the heritability of intelligence . . . shuffling of such tiny Mendelian effects could, [American biologist Raymond] Pearl said, “be relied on, I think, to produce in the future, as it has in the past, Shakespeares, Lincolns, and Pasteurs, from socially and economically humble origins” . . . the eugenicist inability to see that “the economic element is perhaps the most significant biologically” was “stupid” [these quotes taken from a paper by **George Davey Smith** – see discussion before the quote on ‘Fuck off and Die’ – quoting copiously from **Raymond Pearl**].

What Shakespeare wrote, what Lincoln did, what Pasteur invented would have been written, done, or made by someone else had they not done it; most likely by someone living near where they lived at around the time they were living. It would probably have been a man then, because it was more expected of men, then.

The same can be said of Mendel himself. If it had not been him then some other man, or even another friar with time to count the outcome of thousands of pea pairings, would have spotted the pattern. All that would differ is that the effects would not be called 'Mendelian'. A simply story can be told of the slow race to be named discoverer of the theory of evolution and the time the Reverend Charles Darwin had to devote to studying beetles. Indeed, it could be argued that if we had only become a little less stupid a little earlier, more of us would know this to be the case by now, but we humans are limited by our brains. They evolved to handle far simpler problems than those that perplex us today.

The great argument over our relative mental merits matters deeply for the question of our common human survival because it has always been during times when a few of us have seen most of the rest of us as inferior that past civilizations have crumbled. We need now to more widely accept what so many today understand: that **'a genetic notion of socially and historically varying racial categories must lie well outside the scope of "what the best contemporary science tells us about human genetic variation"'**. When it comes to our mental abilities, we are not made up of races that vary in their genetic endowment. We are not made up of groups that are clever and groups that are slow and we do not need some kind of continual survival-of-the-fittest contest to ensure our future adaptability, as if species evolved within a matter of years rather than eons. We will not evolve to become less racist; we have to learn to.



Here is an image of all European states that are current members or official candidate, or official potential candidate for EU accession, and/or the European Economic Area, the Schengen Zone, the European Monetary Union. In other words: “Europe today”. Europe in the future will be differently shaped. Areas are drawn in proportion to population and so you see a sea of cities. People used to believe that some of the citizens of different parts of these lands were inferior to others. Some still do. Map drawn by Ben Hennig.

Widespread belief in the inherent inferiority of particular racial groups still leads to the legitimization of racism. In the 1990s, among the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), racism resulted in the code ‘NHI’ being invented, a code that is still in use, if more covertly, today: ‘Some LAPD officers reporting on disturbances in the black communities of South Los Angeles in 1992 used code to describe disturbances in their areas: NHI – “No Humans Involved”. A year later, in 1993 Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager, was killed by racists in London and the police helped cover up who killed him.

In 1992 ‘**members of the predominantly white, male police force said it was “gallows humour” and regularly described the African-Americans they were meant to protect and serve as “monkeys” and “gorillas”.**’ It was when ridiculed for their stupidity as reports of their racist language spread, that the police in LA began to change the language, and, more slowly, their attitudes. However, attitudes take generations to change. In 2013 Trayvon Martin’s killer was acquitted of the murder of the unarmed black Florida teenager and many in the USA thought that to be acceptable. Others did not and in LA there were riots again.

In Britain the repercussions of what the police did in 1993 are still being felt today as more allegations were made in 2013 of official corruption by an institutionally racist force that saw other humans as inferior. But when such thinking becomes unacceptable in one place that influence what is thought elsewhere, slowly. As the geographer Waldo Tobler said, without realizing just how far the implications of his statement went: 'Everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things.'



Waldo Tobler was the first person to draw a map like that shown above, now of London and South East England, stretched so that everyone is given equal space and the places with no people disappear. Eltham, where Stephen Lawrence lived, is just to the left of Dartford. This distribution of people is changing as London grows and mixes.

Why have we not learnt to be less stupid already? We currently receive our views of the world through an incredibly warped lens. It is not just that many of the main TV channels are owned by somewhat sinister corporate interests, or that the newspapers with the widest of circulations in many countries are often peddling arguments designed to increase mass stupidity. Educational knowledge itself is controlled and disseminated through a very small set of places.

Globally there is a **'staggering amount of inequality in the geography of the production of academic knowledge. The United States and the United Kingdom publish more indexed journals than the rest of the world combined. Western Europe, in particular Germany and the Netherlands, also scores relatively well. Most of the rest of the world then scarcely shows up in these rankings.'**

Residents of Switzerland get to publish three times as many academic papers, in total, than all the papers ever published each year by all the residents of all countries in Africa combined! Is it any wonder that so many people look down on Africans as slow when just a few of the eight million inhabitants of Switzerland are given three times as many opportunities to publish their ideas as compared to all the peoples of a continent of over one billion souls, a continent predicted to number 1.42 billion people by 2025?

In June 2012, Andrew Haldane, executive director with responsibility for financial stability at the Bank of England, and his colleague Benjamin Nelson, a bank economist, explained: **'Like de Mover in the 18th century and Galton in the 19th, the economics profession has for much of the 20th century been bewitched by normality. Over the past five years, the real world has behaved in ways which make a monkey of these theories.'**

Some economists have come to realize the error of their ways, even though they may not know enough of Galton to be careful when using the phrase 'make a monkey'.^[1] Similarly, more demographers may be coming to realize that what a few of their number suggested was the case in 2004, rapid population slowdown, now looks more likely to come about than the slower progress envisaged in the subsequent UN Population Division revisions of 2011.

It is events from now on, much more than the circumstances we find ourselves in, which will determine what does happen, not least whether we more quickly learn to be less stupid, racist and ignorant. If we do that, then 'The world population will probably reach close to its maximum within the lifetime of many people now living. The low and medium scenarios show all-time maximum populations being reached in 2040 and 2075 respectively, the latter being less than one per cent above the 2050 population. Those maxima are 9.0 billion for the medium scenario and 7.5 billion for the low scenario' [From *World Population to 2300, Final Report* section by Alaka Malwade Basu: 'Towards an Understanding of the Emotions in the Population of 2300']

But if a few of us continue to consider ourselves superior and enough of the rest of us are duped into believing that, then economic inequalities will prevail for longer and the population slowdown is unlikely to be as rapid as it currently could be.



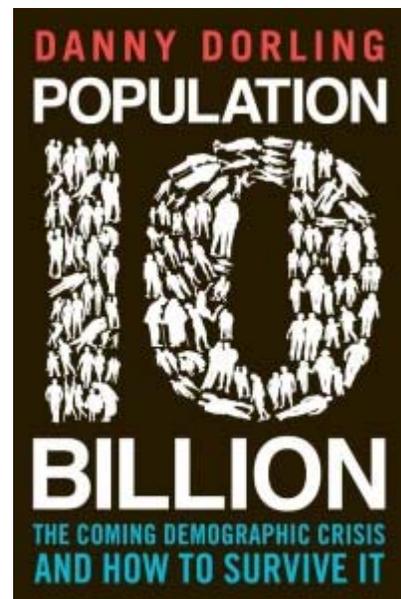
Image of the population distribution of the UK zoomed out from London. Increasingly the divides in the UK are between richer and poorer areas. There are many poorer parts of the South of England, but they only appear visible when drawn on a map that gives everyone equal space. As many people live in the northern conurbation, as in London.

Inequality increases stupidity at every point on the income and wealth scales. It is not just some of the wealthiest people in the world who can be so stupid. Growing up as a poor child can damage your thinking. Above all else, exposure to poverty can damage the growth of the brain. Not getting enough food or sleep and especially not getting enough attention and stimulus has now been shown to physically alter the brain and hence influence thinking, although thankfully even this can be at least partly ameliorated.

Among the hundreds of thousands of scientific studies released in 2012 was one which found that: 'These results suggest that the effects of lower childhood SES [socioeconomic status] on the development of multiple cognitive systems extends into adulthood, but also that such effects may be ameliorated by training in adulthood.' However, it is better not to have to

train later. It is better to be less stupid and not allow so many children to be brought up in poverty. Reduce poverty, you reduce fertility, you reduce extreme wealth, we all become less stupid. Above all else we require more equality, even more than meritocracy, as poverty is reduced best by sharing better.

This blog is an extract from the book "Population 10 billion", published by Constable in 2013



1: Galton believed that monkeys were just below Negroes on the 'normal' curve. He may have seen them as being at the top of another normal curve lying just below humans. Francis Galton wrote that the greatest mental superiority was to be found in the 'modern European' and the lowest in 'the lowest of the Negro races'. He thought he was among the most superior of all.