

PRESENT STATUS OF THE QUESTION OF RACIAL DIFFERENCES

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The question as to whether one race is inferior to another continues a matter of widespread interest and contention. In spite of the fact that several writers have delivered themselves of finalities which they consider conclusive, there continues to be a lively discussion and a continual reopening of the question to admit additional evidence. Within the past two years there have been a half dozen books presented to the public which deal directly with the question of racial differences, and there have been no less than half a hundred articles portraying the results of twenty or thirty investigations.

There are three distinct viewpoints represented in the current literature. The first accepts the fact of race superiority and inferiority and is interested in re-stating it and usually adducing additional evidence to support the thesis. The second viewpoint considers race inferiority possible but not adequately demonstrated, and is usually concerned in balancing arguments for and against the idea. The third is a skeptical group, highly critical of the means used to demonstrate race inferiority and of the results so obtained and generally insisting upon racial equality.

As a whole, the attitudes of the various writers presenting these three viewpoints of the problem are quite changed from those which the exponents of the same contentions showed ten or even five years ago. The race superiority enthusiasts appear to be on the defensive, speaking generally, and they seem to be striving furiously to amass more of the usual evidence to support their thesis, at the same time ignoring the fact that it is the quality rather than the quantity of evidence which is under fire. Those who hold that racial inferiority is a possibility but an undemonstrated one show the reserve and objectiveness of a group which feels that it has the majority of scientific opinion supporting it. The literature of criticism has the fire of enthusiastic discovery about it, combined with an idealistic zeal aiming at the unseating of what it considers scientific inaccuracy and fallacy.

A great deal of the recent writing represents nothing more than dogmatic assertions of one position or another, apparently intended by the writers to settle this disturbing question once and for all. It is

obvious that such statements are of little interest. There are, however, several new writers and a tremendous mass of additional data with which the student who wishes to keep abreast of the discussion must acquaint himself. It is the purpose of this paper to summarize briefly these recent contributions.

The chief exponents of the theory popularized by Lothrop Stoddard and Madison Grant include Peterson, Mercer, Strachan, Koch and Simmons, Garth and Whatley, Luckey, Seago, Lacy, Davidson, Patrick and Hirsch. It should be said that such a summary grouping is apt to be unfair. There are various degrees to which the men mentioned subscribe to the theory of inherent racial superiority. Some of them are convinced and complacent about it. Others are frankly skeptical of their own findings. There are numerous positions between these two. In general, however, the statements of these writers bear out the central thesis of racial difference.

Hirsch's study¹ is sponsored by the National Research Council, recommended to the Genetic Psychological Monograph editors by Professor William McDougall, and transmitted to them by Professor Carl Murchison. The project, conducted under the direction of Professor McDougall, accepts the findings of Professor Ferguson with regard to the inferiority of negro children and is an attempt to continue the investigations of Professor Brigham to show that the differences discovered are natio-racial or sub-racial. There were five thousand five hundred four testees, Grades I to IX inclusive, all foreign born except the Americans and Negroes, all took the tests voluntarily, and principal reliance was placed on the Pintner-Cunningham Primary Mental Test. Their findings ranked the participants as follows as to mentality as measured by the tests: Polish Jews, Swedes, English, Russian Jews, Germans, Americans, Lithuanians, Irish, British Canadians, Russians, Poles, Greeks, Italians, French Canadians, Negroes, Portuguese. The Negro IQ, it is interesting to note in connection with other studies to be mentioned shortly, was found to be 84.6. They conclude that the language factor is negligible,² that there are grades of intelligence among the children of various occupational groups so that "intelligence is related to occupation as cause is to effect,"³ and

¹ Hirsch, N. D. M.: "Genetic Psychological Monographs." Vol. I, 1926, pp. 239-406.

² *Ibid.*, p. 313.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

that "the correlation of anthropometric characteristics and intelligence is discovered to approach zero."¹ Their conclusion with regard to the race problem in the United States is summarized in the following paragraph:

Continued segregation or miscegenation—neither of these alternatives should be tolerated by the intelligent and energetic Americans of today. Another alternative, the formation of a Negro State fostered and protected by the United States and perhaps Great Britain, is the only solution of this problem, even though to many, at first thought, it may seem impossible and fantastic.²

James Ruey Patrick, Phelps-Stokes fellow in the University of Georgia, has made a study³ of forty-seven Negroes and forty-seven whites in the public schools of Athens, Georgia. His findings, using the Otis Self-administering Intermediate Examination, Form A, and another examination of his construction for the measurement of ideals, may be thus cataloged:

1. The mean age of the Negro was found to be one year and six months greater than the mean age of the whites.
2. The mean intelligence score of the Negro is twenty, while that of the whites is forty-two.
3. The median IQ of the Negroes is seventy-two; that of the whites is ninety-eight.
4. The whites are only slightly superior in their ideals.
5. The whites are superior in achievement.

L. D. Lacy, Director of Research in the public schools of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, presents a study of the relative abilities of the white and colored children in the schools of that city.⁴ Using the Stanford-Binet tests, eight hundred seventeen colored children and five thousand one hundred fifty-nine white children were examined by teachers, each of the latter having taken a college course in Binet testing. Four hundred eleven colored children in Grades V to XII inclusive were given the Otis Self-administering Tests. The IQ's of the groups were found to be as follows:

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

² *Ibid.*, p. 399.

³ University of Georgia *Bulletin* No. 27, December, 1926.

⁴ *Elementary School Journal*, Vol. XXVI, March, 1926, pp. 542-546.

	Colored	White
Kindergarten	99	103
Grade I	93	104
Grade II	88	104
Grade III	87	102
Grade V	75	
Grade VI	74	
Grade VII	85	
Grade VIII	84	
Grade IX	81	
Grade X	84	
Grade XI	85	
Grade XII	85	
Average	82	103
Total	1228	5159

He concludes that the colored children are deficient in the abilities measured by the tests and that the relation of achievement in the two groups is about the same as the relation of their IQ's. He further finds that the idea that the colored children show slower mental growth than the whites is substantiated by the Binet test but is not in accord with the findings of the Otis test.

W. P. Davidson of Southwestern University presents arguments on both sides of the question, appears to understand the weakness of intelligence tests, but accepts Brigham's position.¹

T. R. Garth and C. A. Whatley made a study of one thousand two hundred seventy-two children using the National Intelligence Test, Scale A, Form 1, during the fall and winter of 1924.² They found that the Negroes were retarded eighty-seven per cent on the average, that their mental age was below the white norms for the same grades, that the average disparity between mental age and physical age is two and one-half years, and that the IQ of southern Negro children is seventy-five. Professor Garth, in another presentation,³ discloses the racial or national IQ's to be: White, one hundred; Chinese, ninety-eight to ninety-nine; Japanese, ninety-eight; American Negro, seventy-five; Mexican, eighty-nine. The northern Negro is much more intelligent than the southern. "The Chinaman in a

¹ *Proceedings of the Southwestern Political and Social Science Association, 1925*, pp. 7-48.

² *School and Society*, Vol. XXII, October 17, 1925, pp. 501-504.

³ *Scientific Monthly*, Vol. II, September, 1926, pp. 240-245.

morality test was found to be more honest than Anglo-Saxons or Japanese taking the same test." He thinks that the tests used today practically eliminate the language difficulty.

D. W. Seago and T. S. Koldin present a study of Jewish and Italian children,¹ from which they conclude that the Jews are superior to the Italians and that "the difference is not essentially one of language handicap."

Dr. Bertha M. Luckey of the Board of Education of Cleveland, Ohio, summarizes the results of fourteen thousand examinations made in the last two years.² She found the participants to rank as follows in intelligence: Americans, Jews, Hungarians, Bohemians, Negro, Polish, Italian. She is entirely uncritical of the results.

H. L. Koch and R. Simmons, in an exhaustive study of the Negroes and Mexicans of Texas, found that in general the Negroes were inferior to the white population, both urban and rural, and the Mexicans were inferior to the Negroes in the younger age groups and superior to them in the older groups.³ The data were collected in conjunction with the Texas Educational Survey, and it should be said that the authors are somewhat skeptical as to how large a portion of the results is due to factors other than innate intelligence.

L. Strachan, Public Schools Psychologist for Kansas City, Missouri, administered the Stanford Binet tests to Negro children in the city schools. The tests were given by trained examiners who "are kindergarten teachers engaged in teaching half of the day and in giving examinations the other half of the day." He found the Negro children inferior to the white children of the city.⁴

Miss Mercer discovered that there were differences in the color preferences of Negroes and whites but that education operates to change these and that Negroes do not have greater ability to discriminate between colors.⁵

Peterson, with the assistance of several others, presented the Rational Learning test, a mental maze test, and a disc transfer test to one hundred twenty-two twelve-year-old children, of whom seventy-four were whites and forty-eight Negroes. Five of the former and two

¹ *School and Society*, Vol. XXII, pp 546-548.

² *Scientific Monthly*, Vol. XX, March, 1925, pp. 245-248.

³ *Psychological Monographs*, Vol. XXXV, No. 166, 1926, pp 1-116.

⁴ *Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. XIV, October, 1926, pp. 169-177.

⁵ Mercer, Florence M.: *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, Vol. V, 1925, pp. 109-120.

of the latter failed to pass the mental maze tests and were thus disqualified from further participation. In the rational learning test the whites excelled. In the disc transfers "there is a clear and reliable superiority of the whites on the time criterion." In color naming and form naming tests "the differences of speed are all in the same direction, favoring the white children."¹

In general, then, the advocates of racial inferiority and superiority find that the races differ in intelligence, and many of them rank the races or nationalities, usually not distinguishing the two categories, according to their abilities.

The position of the middle group, those who see no evidence to warrant a conclusion one way or another, is well summarized in the statement of Professor H. C. Link. He says, "Nothing in the technique of intelligence tests, as applied so far, warrants any comparison whatsoever between the intelligence of various groups and races."² Burkhard,³ for instance, quotes A. H. Arlitt to the effect that "race norms which do not take the social status factor into account are apt to be to that extent invalid," and summarizes his position with the statement that "There seems to be no definite and conclusive proof that one race surpasses another in mental capacity or native ability."

S. L. Wang⁴ concludes from a study made at Ohio State University involving thirty-four Chinese, eighty-three colored men, seventy-four colored women, and forty-five Russians that the language factor cannot be ignored in attempting racial comparisons, so that failure to take it into proper consideration negates the results. C. S. Slocombe, working in the psychological laboratory of University College in London found the influence of practice to be of fundamental significance in evaluating the results of intelligence tests.⁵

Sunne expresses the conviction that it is "difficult to detect how much racial difference and how much difference in school training and social conditions contribute to the divergence in test results."⁶ In another article⁷ describing the results of a rather elaborate study Sunne concludes that "comparative studies show forth the complexity

¹ Peterson, J. and Others: *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, Vol. V, 1925, pp. 271-284.

² Board of Education Pamphlets, No. 44, p. 87.

³ *Education*, Vol. XLVI, April, 1926, pp. 494-501.

⁴ *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. X, 1926, pp. 102-106.

⁵ *Formal Education*, Vol. IV, 1926, pp. 173-179.

⁶ *School and Society*, Vol. XIX, April, 1924, pp. 469-472.

⁷ *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, Vol. V, 1925, pp. 209-220.

of mental measurements so clearly that generalizations based solely on intelligence rating must be avoided."

H. N. Bond has made a study of what he calls "non-intellectual traits" of Negro adults.¹ He finds that "if the Pressey test be a genuine measure of emotional susceptibility, the results here indicated constitute a denial of popular opinion covering this moot point." He finds little correlation between tests of intelligence and emotionality, is able to detect no distinct Negro group, and concludes that language factors and cultural isolation may easily be held to explain what differences were detected.

Professor Nutting adds the weight of an extensive experience with racial types in all parts of the world to the argument that no conclusions can yet be drawn with regard to inferiority.²

Dr. J. H. Oldham represents the position of the critics of the race hypothesis. In his recent book³ he declares that it is constantly necessary "to remind ourselves that it is impossible to isolate native ability" (p. 69). He insists that "in the present state of our knowledge we have no means of determining how far observable differences are innate or how far they are due to native capacity being stimulated or hindered by circumstances" (p. 75).

Mead stresses the same point.⁴ As he puts it, "A methodology adequate to deal with racial and nationality testing has not even been born" (p. 658). He classifies Ferguson's findings as a piece of circular reasoning, and insists that the three factors of language, social status and education creep into all tests, in spite of precautions.

Neifeld's position is very similar.⁵ He is particularly concerned with the examinations of foreign born Americans, and his conclusion declares that the differences in scores on intelligence tests given such immigrants must be attributed to "factors related to the passage of time and unrelated to race."

Reverend James E. Gregg brings to the discussion six years experience at Hampton Institute.⁶ Insisting that the army tests cannot be held to have contributed anything valid with reference to the question

¹ *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. XXI, 1926, pp. 267-276.

² *School and Society*, Vol. XXIV, July 24, pp. 89-96.

³ "Christianity and the Race Problem." Doran, New York, 1925.

⁴ *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XXXI, March, 1926, pp. 657-667.

⁵ *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XXXII, November, 1926, pp. 423-432.

⁶ *Scientific Monthly*, Vol. XX, March, 1925, pp. 248-254. *Southern Workman*, Vol. LIV, February, 1925, pp. 70-75.

of race differences, he presents some data gathered at Hampton in which the parties were classified according to the amount of Negro blood apparent in their color. Studying the scholastic records of the various groups, Reverend Gregg concludes that there is absolutely nothing to indicate that the presence of more or less white blood influences the achievement of the student. x

Mr. Herskovits presents a rather conclusive refutation of Professor Ferguson's thesis by examining his methods of classification of Negroes and comparing the pure blood with the mixed blood groups.¹

It may be correctly concluded that the concensus of competent scientific thought, contemplating the inability of mental testers to define intelligence, the inadequacy of all attempts to take such factors as education, social status, and language into proper consideration and the deficiencies of testing conditions, finds no proof of racial inferiority or superiority and eliminates the usual methods of determining such standing from the field of scientific usefulness.

¹ Herskovits, M. J.: *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. XXXIII, March, 1926, pp. 32-42.