

## RACIAL DIFFERENCES

BY FRANK G. BRUNER

*Chicago, Ill.*

The perplexing questions arising out of the Negro problem in the South have given rise to some interesting, though not always convincing, discussions of the psychological differences between negroes and whites. Discussions which are not fairly anchored in experimental data are apt to be of little value and indeed often rest on erroneous presuppositions. Of such character is a paper by Bardin (2), who, ignoring such authorities as Boas, Haddon, Rivers and others, begins with the postulate that the negro and white races differ in physiological and mental organization to the same extent as they do in certain obvious anatomical features. He thence argues that differences in culture are fundamental and ineradicable. Of somewhat similar character is the paper by Jordan (3), who however professes to speak from personal acquaintance with the negro population in various parts of the South. His experience is that the more nearly white are the mixed bloods, as judged from skin color, the more do they approach the whites in mental and social alertness.

Experimental tests were made by Baldwin (1) on 37 white and 30 colored delinquent girls, ranging in age from 13 to 21 years, inmates of a Pennsylvania reformatory. Learning capacity was tested by a substitution test, with the average result that the negro girls did only 62.4 per cent. as much work as the whites in a given time, and made 245.3 per cent. more errors. The negro girls were "much slower to warm up to the occasion," and the first to drop back and lose interest. They were difficult to arouse and could not be forced or stimulated except, temporarily, through flattery. Their work was more irregular than that of the white girls, and dependent apparently on moods. While working at the tests they seemed only partially occupied with the task in hand, for at the same time they were making random movements, mumbling, grumbling, humming, and saying original and funny things. The fact that the tests failed to enlist the interest of the negroes to the same degree as the whites makes it difficult to judge of the real capacity for learning of the two groups.

The Binet-Simon tests were applied by Miss Strong (6) to 120 negro and 250 white children in the schools of Columbia, S. C. Unfortunately for our purpose, racial differences were purely an incidental consideration with the author and are not worked out adequately; but the following results are suggestive: 60.8 per cent. of the colored, as compared with 25.2 per cent. of the white children, rated below age in mental development; at age there were 30 per cent. of negro and 42.9 per cent. of white children; and above age 9.2 per cent. of negro and 26 per cent. of white children. The tables show another interesting point on which the author makes no comment. At the ages of six, seven and eight just about twice as many negro children as white rate below age, whereas for the ages of ten, eleven and twelve the superiority of the whites over the negroes is but slight. This suggests that the rate of maturing may be more rapid with the negro children, so as to make them older, mentally, at the age of twelve than white children of the same age.

Mayo (4) contributes a valuable study of the learning capacity of whites and negroes living under similar social and economic conditions and subjected to identical tuition and media of instruction, by comparing the school marks received by negro and white pupils of the New York City High Schools. The 150 negroes available for study were compared with an equal number of white pupils, selected at random from the same classes attended by the negroes. The median mark of the white pupils in all subjects taken together was 66; of the colored pupils, 62; and 29 per cent. of the colored reach the median mark for the whites. The average deviation is 7 for the white pupils and 6.5 for the colored. The per cent. of colored pupils reaching the median mark for whites in each group of school subjects is as follows: in modern languages, 33; in mathematics, 32; in history, 31; in science, 29; in Greek and Latin, 27; in English, 24; in the commercial branches, 22. These results tend to dispel the common conception of the negro as relatively good in English and especially inferior in subjects requiring abstract thought, such as science and mathematics. The poor showing of the negroes in English cannot be explained by home environment, since the white pupils who are here compared with the negroes come, many of them, from the homes of recent immigrants, in which little English is spoken. On the whole, the negroes seem to be distinctly below the whites, though the overlap is sufficient to make it easily possible to teach the two races in the same classes.

The common opinion that primitive peoples have existed in all stages of mental development, reaching down to a condition slightly above that of the ape, is challenged by Spiller (5), who cites authorities to show that even the native Australians display a surprising degree of intellectual power. From the testimony of missionaries and teachers who have lived among primitive peoples, he reaches the unwarranted conclusion that all the peoples of the earth are virtually equal to Europeans in mental and moral capacity. As a matter of fact, personal experience with a primitive people in their customary surroundings affords a very unsafe basis for estimating their mentality. A test of the power of meeting unfamiliar situations is necessary.

A very suggestive scheme for the study of any social group is offered by Thomas (7), who reports that he has applied it to the study of the Negro and of some European peasants. He assumes that the main factor responsible for the differences in mental and social attainment found among different peoples is expressible in terms of interest, stimulation, imitation, opportunity, occupational differentiation due to traditional or geographical limitations, and mental attitude in general. With Boas and others he believes that the general organization of mind is much the same in all races of mankind, and that the relative intelligence and advancement of a social group are dependent on the objects to which they give attention.

#### REFERENCES

1. BALDWIN, B. T. The Learning of Delinquent Adolescent Girls as Shown by a Substitution Test. *J. of Educ. Psychol.*, 1913, 4, 317-33
2. BARDIN, J. The Psychological Factor in the Southern Race Problem. *Pop. Sci. Mo.*, 1913, 83, 368-374.
3. JORDAN, H. E. The Biological Status and Social Worth of the Mulatto. *Pop. Sci. Mo.*, 1912, 82, 573-582.
4. MAYO, M. J. The Mental Capacity of the American Negro. *Archives of Psychol.*, 1913, No. 28. Pp. 70. Also Columbia Contrib. to Philos. and Psychol., Vol. XXII, No. 2.
5. SPILLER, G. The Mentality of the Australian Aborigines. *Sociol. Rev.*, Oct., 1913, 1-6.
6. STRONG, A. M. Three Hundred Fifty White and Colored Children Measured by the Binet-Simon Measuring Scale of Intelligence. *Ped. Sem.*, 1913, 20, 485-512
7. THOMAS, W. I. Race Psychology, Standpoint and Questionnaire. *Amer. J. of Sociol.*, 1912, 17, 725-775.