

# RESULTS OF INDIVIDUAL TESTS OF TWELVE-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN ON ST. HELENA ISLAND<sup>1</sup>

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St. Helena Island is near Savannah, Georgia, being just off the coast of nearly the extreme southern point of South Carolina. On the island are about 5,000 practically pure blooded Negroes and also approximately 60 whites mostly of recent arrival. Negroes have been on the island for roughly three centuries, those now there being the descendents of former slaves who remained on the island during its possession by the Federal troops of the Civil War after the Southern whites had found refuge in the interior of the state. The deserted plantations were divided and sold at a nominal price to the former slaves, whose children have had possession of the property ever since. The Penn school, located in the center of the island, was started as early as 1862, and is said to be the first school house provided for the Negroes in the South. It has continued there without interruption for 67 years. Only in the spring of 1927 was a bridge to the island completed. In 1901 the Penn school was incorporated under the laws of South Carolina, and industrial education was introduced by the present two co-principals. The children about whom this report is concerned were tested in the nine public schools as well as in the Penn school. Some of the buildings of these public schools are very poor and facilities are bad; but recently one of them has become a Rosenwald school and is now housed in a good building. Many of the teachers have been students in the Penn school, whose faculty members were educated mostly outside of the state. Our individual tests were given only to twelve-year-old children.

The testing was part of a research project directed by Dr. T. J. Woolfer, Jr., of the University of North Carolina, under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council. The writer was asked to take charge of the testing, and he went to the island in the early spring of 1928 to make certain preliminary tests and to determine how well the reactions of the children could be obtained to various tests and whether there would be any language difficulties. Later that spring Mr. J. L. Whiting of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial School, who had recently had special training in testing technique in the Ohio State University, carried out certain group tests, and in the fall of 1928 Mr. C. W. Telford, now Assistant Professor of Psychology in the University of North Dakota, spent over two months there carrying out, under the direction of the writer, various individual tests on twelve-year-olds. Besides repeating some of the group tests so that the reliability of the responses could be determined, Mr. Telford administered to each of

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slightly more than one hundred children one or all of five individual tests, as follows: (1) The Rational Learning test, a five-letter form with a fore-exercise on three letters; (2) three of the Pintner-Pater-son performance tests—the Mare and Foal Picture Board, the Two Figure Form Board, and the Healy Puzzle "A"; and (3) the Porteus Maze test. The Rational Learning, the Two Figure Form Board, and the Healy test were each given twice. The group tests given by Telford were the Goodenough Drawing test, the Digit-Symbol, and the Symbol-Digit test, these last two being substitution tests which are frequently found in batteries of intelligence tests.

### RESULTS

The results will be published in full in a psychological journal.<sup>2</sup> Here it is sufficient to say that they show (1) a very large difference between these island Negroes and white children in different parts of the United States who have been tested with these tests; (2) a considerable difference between the scores of these Negroes and Negroes in this country who have been brought up in better school systems. The Rational Learning test, which we have found in other studies to reflect only to a small degree the environmental and educational differences experienced by different groups of children, makes a considerably smaller difference (both between Negroes and whites and between the island Negroes and other Negroes) than do the other tests used of which we have reliability measures. It is also found that the Penn school children, with better opportunities than the children in the other schools on the island, were very much superior to these other children in the group tests, but not uniformly superior on the individual tests. The Rational Learning test, in fact, shows no reliable difference at all.

These results corroborate those which Lanier and the writer have obtained in earlier studies,<sup>3</sup> and they show that group intelligence tests are unsatisfactory for comparison of races or nationalities of different training and cultural backgrounds. They support the view that the best tests to use are such as do not draw much upon general culture and training and as afford constant stimulus to the subject throughout the tests. It is yet an open question as to what extent the race differences reported by various testers are due to environmental conditions and not simply to endowment. Of the three individual tests given twice, the Rational Learning shows considerably the least practice effect, a matter that is also of importance. It also gave the highest reliability coefficient, showing the greatest consistency in the rating of the subjects according to ability.

<sup>2</sup>Jour. Comp. Psychol., 1930.

<sup>3</sup>See especially Peterson, Joseph. *The Comparative Abilities of White and Negro Children*. Comp. Psychol. Monog., 1923, 1, No. 5, page 141.

Peterson, Joseph, and Lanier, Lyle H. *Studies in the Comparative Abilities of Whites and Negroes*. Mental Measurement Monog., No. 5, 1929, page 156.