

CORRELATIONS OF MENTAL ABILITIES

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Correlations of Mental Abilities by Benjamin R. Simpson

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BENJAMIN R. SIMPSON

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BY
BENJAMIN R. SIMPSON, Ph.D.

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CORRELATIONS OF MENTAL ABILITIES*

I. THE PROBLEM AND ITS IMPORTANCE

What constitutes general intelligence? How can we measure its amount? These are questions of immense practical importance as well as of theoretical interest. Men in every line of activity are called upon every day to pass judgment upon the mental capacity of individuals and of groups. In many cases a choice must be made between a number of applicants of varying degrees of capacity and fitness. Other things being fairly equal, the matter of prime importance for the judge to discern is the general mental ability of each of the persons in question. This judgment must be made in one of three ways: (1) by the examinations the candidate has passed and the certificates he has gained as a result of definite study; (2) by the opinions or recommendations concerning the candidate, given by those who know him and his work; (3) by the general impression gained from the way the candidate conducts himself during the course of the interview. We shall not dwell upon the inadequacy of these tests as a means of determining the general intelligence of an individual. The first, at best, gives a measure of the candidate's attainments along the lines tested, and only indirectly and secondarily gives an indication of his ability. The second and third are subject to all the inaccuracies of unscientific and ill-grounded personal opinion. Much as we need to get the right people into the right places, comparatively little has been done to replace these empirical methods by scientific ones.

*The problem of this research was suggested and outlined by Professor E. L. Thorndike, and indebtedness is cheerfully acknowledged to him for a teacher's guidance and help in every difficulty. The work as carried out has been somewhat less comprehensive than that originally suggested.

Grateful acknowledgment is also due the seventeen professors and students of Teachers College who acted as members of the "Good" group of subjects, to Miss Rusk for assistance in scoring a number of the records, and to Dr. Whitley.

For the conclusions stated, the writer alone is responsible.