

Review of: "Deep roots of admixture-related cognitive differences in the USA?"

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The authors should be commended for this study. Unfortunately, it is difficult if not impossible to control for the social/historical confounds. In the 19th century and the early 20th, mulattos were a much more distinct category in American society than they are today. During the time of slavery, they were much more often emancipated and rarely assigned to fieldwork. They were typically household servants and, as such, expected to have a good understanding of spoken and written English.

This intermediate status is described by Gunnar Myrdal (1944, p. 696) in his classic work:

... thus the mulattoes tended early to form a separate intermediary caste of their own. Although they were constantly augmented by mulatto ex-slaves, they seldom married down into the slave group. In such cities as New Orleans, Charleston, Mobile, Natchez, and later Washington, highly exclusive mulatto societies were formed which still exist, to a certain extent, today.

From the 1920s on, the distinction between mulattoes and negroes became less important, largely through the spread of universal education. "Colored" schools became Black schools, and the two groups intermarried more and more. Today, mulattoes no longer exist as a distinct community within the U.S., except in some parts of Louisiana.

So I would expect to see a correlation between European admixture and literacy, but such a relationship could be explained by the above social/historical factors.

In the case of Puerto Rico, the social/historical factors tend to work in the opposite direction. The lightest-skinned Puerto Ricans tend to live in the interior of the island, where educational opportunities were, until the 1960s, much more limited. Also, Puerto Ricans of African ancestry tended to be less attached to Catholicism and more easily evangelized by American Protestant missionaries, who emphasized literacy as a means to encourage Bible reading. In general, Protestantism stresses knowledge of the Bible, whereas Catholicism tends to emphasize practices that don't require literacy.

Reference

Myrdal, G. (1944). *An American Dilemma. The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. Harper and Row.

