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# Personality and Individual Differences

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## Book Review

**Intelligence: A Unifying Explanatory Construct for the Social Sciences, Richard Lynn, Tatu Vanhanen. Ulster Institute for Social Research, Bristol (2012). 530 pp., paperback, ISBN: 978-0-9568811-8-2.**

Ten years ago Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen made a major advance in both psychology and economics by the calculation and presentation of the IQs of all nations in the world and demonstrating that these can account for approximately half of the variance in economic development measured by per capita income (Lynn & Vanhanen, 2002). Over the next decade they added to and refined these national IQs and a number of scholars have taken up their work and confirmed and extended their analysis. It consolidates and extends their work in the integration of psychology with economics and the other social sciences. It summarizes and extends these developments and shows the explanatory value of national differences in IQs for a large number of economic, educational, cognitive, political, demographic, sociological, epidemiological, climatic and geographical phenomena.

The book begins by presenting updated measured IQs for 160 nations and estimated IQs for a further 39 nations and territories. It then shows in successive chapters that IQs are associated among individuals and across nations with educational attainment; the economic variables of per capita income, poverty and inequality; the political institutions of democracy, gender equality and corruption (negatively); the health variables of nutrition, life expectancy, infant mortality (negatively), and the prevalence of disease (negatively); fertility (negatively); the provision of water and sanitation; crime (negatively); liberalism; religion (negatively); and happiness.

The intelligence test was constructed by Alfred Binet in 1905. During the succeeding century it has been shown that intelligence, measured as the IQ (the intelligence quotient), is a determinant of many important social phenomena, including educational attainment, earnings, socio-economic status, crime and health. The theme is that the explanatory value of intelligence that has been established for individuals can be extended to the explanation of the differences between groups that have been found in the other social sciences. Physics is the most basic of these sciences, because the phenomena of the others can be explained by the laws of physics. For this reason, physics has been called the queen of the physical sciences.

The structure of this book is that by showing those differences in intelligence explain substantial proportions of the variance in a number of social phenomena among individuals, and then showing that national differences in intelligence also explain substantial proportions of the variance in these phenomena among nations.

Their new book begins by proposing that intelligence should be regarded as a unifying explanatory construct for the social sciences analogous to those in the physical sciences, where physics, astronomy and chemistry are unified by a few common theoretical constructs, such as mass and energy, that explain a wide range of phenomena. They note that the social sciences lack unifying constructs of this kind. The disciplines of the social sciences, comprising psychology, economics, political science, demography, sociology, criminology, anthropology and epidemiology are largely isolated from one another, each with their own constructs and vocabulary.

They argue that just as physics is the most basic of the physical sciences, psychology can be considered the most basic of the social sciences. The reason for this is that psychology is principally concerned with differences between individuals, while the other social sciences are principally concerned with differences between groups such as socio-economic classes, ethnic and racial populations, regions within countries, and nations. They argue that these groups are aggregates of individuals, so the laws that have been established in psychology should be extended to the group phenomena that are the concern of the other social sciences. Thus, psychology is potentially the queen of the social sciences, just as physics is the queen of the physical sciences.

## Reference

Lynn, R., & Vanhanen, T. (2002). *IQ and the wealth of nations*. Westport: Praeger.

J. Philippe Rushton  
 Department of Psychology,  
 University of Western Ontario,  
 London, ON, Canada N6A 5C2  
 Tel.: +1 519 661 3685.  
 E-mail address: [rushton@uwo.ca](mailto:rushton@uwo.ca)

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