



Book reviews

The Cambridge Handbook of Intelligence, Edited by Robert J Sternberg and Scott Barry Kaufmann, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011, 984 pages., ISBN 978-0-521-51806-2 (Hardback), ISBN 978-0-521-73911-5 (Paperback)

A Tour de Force?

The Cambridge Handbook of Intelligence has the look of a tour de force. This book contains chapters on everything from animal to artificial intelligence, social to emotional intelligence, sex and race differences in intelligence, and intelligence and creativity, health, personality, wisdom, and rationality. Just about everything you could imagine being related to intelligence has been touched upon. Many researchers with long resumes have contributed, but up-and-coming relative newcomers such as Colin de Young are represented as well. At nearly 900 pages, its volume is certainly impressive. If you didn't know any better, you would think the book was comprehensive of the views in the field, and that there is substantial agreement that the robust correlations among mental ability tests hide more than they reveal, due to cultural chauvinism and divorce from real life in test format and content. You also might think, based on the book's doorstop weight, that we know a lot about what intelligence really is.

You would be wrong on both counts. The views of several prominent researchers who have made significant contributions to our understanding of the robustness of measures of intelligence and their associations with life outcomes, especially educational and occupational outcomes, are not represented here, including Linda Gottfredson, Nathan Kuncel, David Lubinski, Terri Moffitt, Paul Sackett, and Frank Schmidt. No one actively studying genetic influences on intelligence is represented either, and, in general, the treatment of the biology, evolution, and neuroscience of intelligence is weak, despite a fine chapter by Rich Haier. But the area that stands out as especially weakly treated is developmental. There are chapters about intelligence in infancy, childhood, and adulthood, but these phases are treated as landing platforms rather than way stations, as if the Pony Express were about the places where riders changed horses and grabbed meals rather than the cross-continent journey. There is also nothing about cognitive ageing, the last stage of the journey before the all-important delivery at the destination, and nothing that actually addresses the rivers to be forded, the mountains to be crossed, or the Indians to be dodged, in other words what happens to people's intelligence as they move from one of these life stages to the next, nor why, nor to what degree intelligence might be manipulable.

Just my opinion, but I think this latter omission is because we flat-out don't *know* much about how intelligence develops, and until we do, we're not going to know much about what it is or how to foster it either. We're also not going to understand its biology, evolution, or neuroscience. Our lack of understanding comes screaming out of many chapters in this book – the authors of the most rigorous chapters admit it freely. Ironically, this modesty (realism) is least clear in the chapters that wander furthest from the topic of the conventional IQ test. Don't get me wrong: I'm far from sure the people I mentioned above who did *not* contribute to this book know more about intelligence than many of the people who did. I *am* sure, though, that we need all the voices, as well as some really new ideas. Intelligence matters, and, like it or not, the conventional tests measure well the manifestation of it that matters in the society we've got. We *need* to know how much we can foster it and how. This is especially the case should the answer to the first be 'not much' or the answer to the second very expensive.

Some practicalities: There's no point in reading this book cover-to-cover. You'll be bored to tears at its repetitiveness. The same facts come up over and over again, from chapter to chapter and sometimes even within chapters. You'll be thoroughly jingled (or is it jangled?) too – will someone please explain to me the difference between implicit and tacit knowledge? Crystallized intelligence and knowledge? Social and emotional intelligence? But if you want to sample this book, read the last chapter by Earl Hunt. Not only will you see how much we don't know, but you'll see why we need to understand not just the way stations but the journey.

Wendy Johnson

Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology,
Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh,
7 George Square, Edinburgh, EH3 5EJ, UK
E-mail address: wendy.johnson@ed.ac.uk

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The Chosen People: A Study of Jewish Intelligence and Achievements. Richard Lynn, Publisher's name and city: Washington Summit Publishers, Augusta, GA (2011), Pp. 408. ISBN 978-1-59368-036-7

Richard Lynn's book reviews the evidence that Ashkenazi Jews have surpassed the peoples among whom they have

lived in educational, occupational and intellectual attainment and achievements from the middle decades of the nineteenth century. He begins by summarizing the main and sometimes bizarre theories that have been advanced to explain this. These are that Jews have an innate “abnormally developed will” and well developed family and ethnic networks through which they support each other (Houston Stewart Chamberlain); an exceptionally strong attachment to money and work hard to obtain it (Werner Sombart); a marginal place in the societies in which they live (Marginal Man theory), which enables them to operate outside conventional modes (Thorstein Veblen); “exceptional skill in financial and business management” (Daniel Moynihan, the former United States Senator, and Nathan Glazer, the Harvard sociologist); “the ability to take quick advantage of new opportunities, to recognise an unprecedented situation when it arose and devise methods of handling it” (the historian Paul Johnson); Jews are “creative, pliable, individualistic, restless and undisciplined” (the historian Lewis Napier); Jews have “bourgeois virtues such as sobriety, a desire to succeed, a dislike of violence, an emphasis on education and learning, and high self-esteem” (the economist Cormac O’Grada); Jews are “highly motivated to create a new and more secure life for themselves” which gave them “the willingness to work hard” (the sociologist Suzanne Rutland).

Lynn argues and produces some evidence to show that none of these theories has empirical support. He devotes most of his book to advancing his own theory that high intelligence is the principal factor responsible for Ashkenazi Jewish achievements. He summarizes studies of the intelligence of Ashkenazi Jews in the United States, Britain, Canada, Poland and Israel and shows that Jews have an average IQ of approximately 110, in relation to a European gentile average IQ of 100. He then documents the high educational, socio-economic and intellectual achievements of Ashkenazi Jews in all countries in which they are, or have been, present in significant numbers. Lynn notes that the Mizrahim (Oriental) Jews from North Africa and the Near East, nearly all of whom are now in Israel, have a lower average IQ which he estimates at 91.

In many instances the magnitude of the Jewish over-achievement can only be described as astonishing. For instance, in Germany Jews were about 0.8% of the population in the 1930s but received 24% of the Nobel Prizes for science and literature. In Italy, the number of Jews has been negligible at about .075% of the population, but Jews have been 24% of the Nobel Prize winners.

Similarly in Russia, Jews have been about two per cent of the population and have produced 70% of the Nobel Prize winners. Jews have also produced ten of the 14 recipients the Fields Medal or the Wolf Prize awarded for outstanding work in mathematics, while in chess, fifteen of the 33 Russian grandmasters have been Jews.

In the United States, Jews have about 3% of the population during the twentieth century and up to the present, while 62 of the 200 American Nobel Prize winners for science, literature and economics have been Jewish. Jews in the United States have also been highly successful in the professions and in business and finance. In the year 2009, *Forbes Magazine* published a list of the richest four hundred Americans and 32% of these were Jews. These remarkable statistics give a flavor of the extraordinary achievements of Jews that Lynn documents in country after country.

Lynn concludes by discussing the explanations of the high Jewish IQ. He considers that the three most plausible theories are the eugenic, persecution, and discrimination hypotheses. The eugenic hypothesis states that the Ashkenazim have practiced eugenic customs and practices, that have promoted a greater number of surviving children of the more intelligent, including rabbis who have been permitted to marry as contrasted with the celibate priesthood that has been required for Catholic Europeans. The persecution hypothesis states that gentiles have persecuted Jews for some 2000 years, that in these persecutions Jews were frequently killed, and that the more intelligent Jews have been able to avoid being killed because they have foreseen the danger in good time and moved to a more friendly country, or by going into hiding, or by paying ransom to their persecutors to spare them. It has been the less intelligent Jews who have been killed. The discrimination hypothesis states that gentiles in Europe discriminated against Jews by limiting the kinds of occupation they were permitted to pursue to second hand goods trading and money lending. Many Jews took up money-lending, and this selected for the high intelligence required to judge the appropriate rates of interest and which borrowers were likely to repay. Lynn concludes that all three theories are plausible and have likely contributed to the high Jewish IQ.

All in all Lynn's book provides an easy-to-read introduction to this seldom raised issue. Personally, I would like to have seen more discussion of when, exactly, the high IQ of the Jews arose. Was it just over the last 200 years or does it go back over 2000 years or more to the time to Solomon. Personally I lean toward the latter, but other scholars do not (Cocrane & Harpending, 2009).

Reference

Cocrane, G., & Harpending, H. (2009). *The 10,000 year explosion*. New York: Basic Books.

J. Philippe Rushton
E-mail address: rushton@uwo.ca

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