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Michael Andregg
mmandregg@stthomas.edu

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Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen, *Intelligence: A Unifying Concept for the Social Sciences*. Ulster Institute for Social Research, London, England, 2013.

Reviewed by Michael Andregg

This book is a *magnum opus*. It is the climax work of a pair of social scientists who take the word “science” seriously. Lynn is a psychologist and Vanhanen an emeritus political scientist, who have labored for decades to bring light to a long taboo domain – relationships between intelligence and social phenomena like wealth and health and political institutions and such. Mindful of these taboos, and that some scholars rebel against any definition of “intelligence” much less its measurement by IQ or any other metric, the authors are rigorously and relentlessly quantitative, which makes parts of the book a tough read for those who may be allergic to correlations or numbers.

It is well worth the effort, however, because the authors are very well aware of the difficulties of definition and measurement of any psychological or sociological variable, much less the explosive IQ, and of the limitations of correlation analysis. So they use the tools of their fields as meticulously as possible. They are also extremely ambitious, setting out to unify the disparate social sciences around a core concept of intelligence (both individual and national) much like physics was unified by first, identification of fundamental forces (mass, gravity, energy, etc.) and, later, by the theories of relativity and quantum mechanics.

So they do not limit themselves to IQ and the Wealth of Nations (the title of a previous collaboration by the authors, published in 2002) but rather ask whether significant correlations can be found between IQ and educational attainment, criminal proclivity, religion, public health and many other socioeconomic or cultural variables that have been measured by others across individuals and nations.

Since it is so quantitative, the book includes 15 figures and 61 tables dense with data and meticulously referenced to over 500 sources. Their bibliography alone takes 66 pages. So the work would deserve a place in any social science library on its merits as a meticulous review reference alone. But it is much more than that. It is a serious attempt to break through a taboo that has stunted several social sciences for at least two generations. That is the taboo on systematic (much less quantitative) discussion of intelligence as a meaningful variable, and of IQ as a way to measure that variable.

Their prose is clear, concise, and much easier to read than the rafts of tables and regression charts. They are quite frank about critics without being unduly defensive or judgmental. They appear to me to be relentlessly sincere about their overarching mission, which is to unify the disciplinary chaos that now constitutes social “science”. Their most determined critics would still benefit from the wealth of data and references they present to support their theses.

Since they think that “intelligence” is fundamental to many social variables of interest, the authors cast a wide net to find correlations between IQ and (brace yourself; this list is long): economic development, educational attainment, poverty, income inequality, unemployment, political institutions, democratization, gender inequalities, corruption, national health statistics such as life expectancy and infant mortality, crime, cognition, liberalism – conservatism, religion, happiness, and indices of human conditions developed by the UN and others. Each of these sections introduces literature by other scholars who have tried to define and quantify such difficult variables. Those are then correlated with and sometimes regressed against the authors’ (and other scholars’) estimates of national average IQs.

This is a genuine *magnum opus* that strives to break out of the self-imposed box canyon of social science created by those who reject the very concept of “intelligence” as intrinsically unknowable. We are all intimately familiar with fears that racism might contaminate statistics or that sinister political goals might compromise clear-eyed consideration of sensitive subjects, like the obvious fact that intelligence varies among individuals and across groups. But we also should be brave enough to face the wealth of evidence that intelligence matters, both for individuals and for groups as large as nations.

Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen are brave enough, and they have done the very best they could to pass decades of study of these difficult topics on to us. Whether their core concept results in more unity among the disparate social sciences is up to others. But I recommend “Intelligence: A Unifying Concept for the Social Sciences” to all serious scholars and research libraries, without any reservations at all. Be prepared to learn a lot about the real world of human beings and institutions that we share.