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Book Review

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

In the present book Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen update their work on the calculation of IQs of all nations in the world, first published in 2002, and on their theory that these contribute to the explanation of why some nations are rich and others remain poor. Their innovative work has now become widely accepted as founding a new subdiscipline that Pesta, Bertsch, McDaniel, Mahoney, and Poznanski (2012) have designated *differential epidemiology*.

The theme of Lynn and Vanhanen's new book is that differences in intelligence explain significant proportions of the variance between individuals for many important social phenomena, including educational attainment, income, health, life expectancy, liberalism and happiness, and, negatively, for poverty, fertility, crime and religious belief. The main body of the book sets out the evidence that national differences in intelligence similarly explain significant proportions of the variance between nations in these same phenomena. They argue that this is predictable because nations are aggregates of individuals, and therefore the laws that have been established in psychology for individuals should be extendable to the explanation of social phenomena.

Lynn and Vanhanen conclude with a discussion of the evolutionary psychology of national differences in intelligence. They document the evidence that these are significantly associated with climate and latitude such that national IQs are higher in populations that have evolved in colder latitudes. They propose that the

explanation for this is that survival in colder environments was more cognitively demanding and exerted strong selection pressure for enhanced intelligence as a genetic adaptation.

Their new book is a further milestone in the development of their work on the explanatory value of national differences in IQs for a large number of economic, educational, cognitive, political, demographic, sociological and epidemiological phenomena. Hence, they propose that the construct of intelligence should be regarded as a unifying explanatory construct for the social sciences, akin to energy, mass and so forth that unify the physical sciences. Just as physics has sometimes been described as the queen of the physical sciences so, they propose, psychology, not economics, should be regarded as the queen of the social sciences.

References

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