



What Is Intelligence?: Beyond the Flynn Effect

By James R. Flynn

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Professor James Flynn is one of the most creative and influential psychologists in the field of intelligence. The 'Flynn Effect' refers to the massive increase in IQ test scores over the course of the twentieth century and the term was coined to recognize Professor Flynn's central role in measuring and analyzing these gains. For over twenty years, psychologists have struggled to understand the implications of IQ gains. Do they mean that each generation is more intelligent than the last? Do they suggest how each of us can enhance our own intelligence? Professor Flynn is finally ready to give his own views. He asks what intelligence really is and gives a surprising and illuminating answer. This book bridges the gulf that separates our minds from those of our ancestors a century ago. It is a fascinating and unique book that makes an important contribution to our understanding of human intelligence.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The Flynn Effect refers to data the author studied indicating massive IQ gains in the developed world during the 20th century. Now Flynn speculates on the cause for these apparent gains. His answer centers on the replacement of concrete, experience-based thinking by abstract scientific thinking. Citing many scholarly works, Flynn paints a dynamic picture of what intelligence is and the role of a person's genetic background, physiology and neurology, immediate environment and broader social factors. He notes, for instance, that an individual's small genetic advantage can be multiplied greatly by environmental forces. An important chapter looks at a fatal consequence of IQ inflation: the use of outdated IQ tests and norms could lead to the execution of someone convicted of a capital crime who by today's standards is mentally disabled. Flynn's book is not always an easy read, given abstruse statistical analysis and some awkward writing (There is some evidence that members of Congress are less obtuse today at least in speeches designed for their peers). Despite these flaws, he has produced an impressively multidimensional and often wise look at the elusive topic of human intelligence. (*Sept. 21*)

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Review

"Flynn is a cautious and careful writer. Unlike many others in I.Q. debates, he resists grand philosophizing. His books ("What Is Intelligence?") consist of a series of plainly stated statistical observations, in support of deceptively modest conclusions, and the evidence in support of Flynn's original observation is now so overwhelming that the Flynn effect has moved from theory to fact...average I.Q.s shift over time ought to create a "crisis of confidence," Flynn writes in "What Is Intelligence?", the latest attempt to puzzle through the implications of his discovery. The best way to understand why I.Q.s rise, Flynn argues, is to look at one of the most widely used I.Q. tests, the so-called WISC (for Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children)."

--Malcolm Gladwell, The New Yorker

"It is not just the fascinating effect that makes the book special. It's also Flynn's style. There's an unusual combination of clarity, wit, apposite allusion, and farsightedness in making connections and exploring unexpected consequences. The Flynn effect, in Flynn's hands, makes a good, gripping, puzzling, and not-quite-finished story..."

--Ian Deary, Edinburgh University

"This book is a gold mine of pointers to interesting work, much of which was new to me. All of us who wrestle with the extraordinarily difficult questions about intelligence that Flynn discusses are in his debt.."

--Charles Murray, American Enterprise Institute & co-author of The Bell Curve

"This highly engaging, and very readable, book takes forward the Dickens/Flynn model of intelligence in the form of asking yet more provocative questions. . . A most unusual book, one that holds the reader's attention and leaves behind concepts and ideas that force us to rethink all sorts of issues.."

--Sir Michael Rutter, Kings College London

"Flynn provides the first satisfying explanation of the massive rise in IQ test scores. He avoids both the

absurd conclusion that our great grandparents were all mentally retarded and the equally unsatisfactory suggestion that the rise has just been in performance on IQ tests without any wider implications.."

--N. J. Mackintosh, University of Cambridge

"Citing many scholarly works, Flynn paints a dynamic picture of what intelligence is and the role of a person's genetic background, physiology and neurology, immediate environment and broader social factors...he has produced an impressively multidimensional and often wise look at the elusive topic of human intelligence."

--Publisher's Weekly

"Mainstream IQ researchers, who are used to being demonized when they are not being ignored, admire Flynn, who is politically a man of the left, for his fairness, geniality, insight, and devotion to advancing knowledge."

--Steve Sailor, vdare.com

"In What is Intelligence? James R. Flynn...suggests that we should not facilely equate IQ gains with intelligence gains. He says that it's necessary to 'dissect intelligence' into its component parts: 'solving mathematical problems, interpreting the great works of literature, finding on the spot solutions, assimilating the scientific worldview, critical acumen and wisdom.' When this dissection is carried out, several paradoxes emerge, which Flynn in this engaging book attempts to reconcile."

--Richard Restak, American Scholar

"The 20th century saw the "Flynn Effect" - massive gains in IQ from one generation to another."

--Scientific American Mind

"In a brilliant interweaving of data and argument, Flynn calls into question fundamental assumptions about the nature of intelligence that have driven the field for the past century. There is something here for everyone to lose sleep over. His solution to the perplexing issues revolving around IQ gains over time will give the IQ Ayatollahs fits!"

--S. J. Ceci, Cornell University

"What Is Intelligence? is one of the best books I have read on intelligence-ever...This is a brilliant book because, first, it helps resolve paradoxes that, in the past, seemed not to lend themselves to any sensible solutions...one of the best things about the book is Flynn's sense of humility...this is a masterful book that will influence thinking about intelligence for many years to come. It is one of those few books for which one can truly say that it is must reading for anyone."

--Robert J. Sternberg, PsycCRITIQUES

"...In this thoughtful, well-written book, Flynn offers an account of why the so-called Flynn effect occurs and what it means (and does not mean)....This is the clearest, most engaging work on intelligence....All will learn from the author's nuanced arguments. Some may quibble with Flynn's observations, but their work is cut for them: one cannot fault his clarity or ingenuity. Essential.

--D.S. Dunn, Moravian College, CHOICE

"...James Flynn is best known for having discovered a stubborn fact...he established that in every country where consistent IQ tests have been given to large numbers of people over time, scores have been rising as far back as the records go, in some cases to the early 20th century. What Is Intelligence? is Flynn's attempt to explain this phenomenon, now known as the Flynn effect... an important take on what we have made of ourselves over the past few centuries and might yet make of ourselves in the future."

--Cosma Shalizi, Assistant Professor in the Statistics Department at Carnegie Mellon University and an external professor at the Santa Fe Institute, American Scientist

About the Author

James R. Flynn is Professor Emeritus at the University of Otago, New Zealand, and a recipient of the University's Gold Medal for Distinguished Career Research. In 2007, the International Society for Intelligence Research named him its Distinguished Contributor of the Year. He has been Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford, Distinguished Visiting Speaker at Cornell, delivered the Stafford Little Lecture at Princeton, and been profiled in Scientific American. Professor Flynn has recently published his current views on race and IQ in *Where Have All the Liberals Gone? Race, Class, and Ideals in America* (Cambridge, 2008).

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Monte Lawson:

What do you regarding book? It is not important with you? Or just adding material when you want something to explain what your own problem? How about your extra time? Or are you busy man? If you don't have spare time to do others business, it is give you a sense of feeling bored faster. And you have extra time? What did you do? Everybody has many questions above. They should answer that question mainly because just their can do that. It said that about publication. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is suitable. Because start from on pre-school until university need this *What Is Intelligence?: Beyond the Flynn Effect* to read.

Rose Villegas:

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