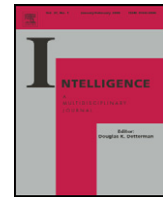




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Intelligence



Book reviews

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 overachievement 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 of 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.

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