

[05] Intelligence

A. Introduction

While the craze for IQ testing has definitely diminished we humans remain obsessed with intelligence. Some research suggests that in many situations we make decisions about our relationships based on assessments of intelligence than on beauty, physical well being or even financial status, and we certainly do so in many other situations.

Key Concepts

- Intelligence vs Rationality
- IQ (measurement, evaluation)
- Mental retardation
- Eugenics

The Fundamental Attribution Error often kicks in as we watch other people, leading us to conclude that the doubtful behaviors we see others do are caused by their stupidity—even though, of course, when we think about why we might have done such things ourselves (which most of us have) that's almost never our first thought about ourselves.

The tendency to make such judgments about other people's intelligence so spontaneously and so regularly is striking in its own right, but think, too, about how often we think about our own intelligence as we make choices for ourselves, sometimes berating ourselves for our stupidity; sometimes patting ourselves on the back for our cleverness—even if we typically keep such thoughts to ourselves.

B. Questions to Guide Your (Re)Search

[1] How often do people make attributions about the intelligence of others (or themselves)? What are the circumstances and situations that bring forth such judgments?

[2] Type 1 thinking is very powerful and makes us very smart, but precisely because it does it can give us a false sense of security that can lead us seriously astray. How often do people who are perfectly intelligent make mistakes *because* they are intelligent? What sorts of situations are particularly prone to causing such errors in our thinking?

[3] Because they use different systems of thought it is quite possible to be intelligent* (which uses Type 1 thinking) and still act irrationally* (which uses Type 2 thinking). How many examples can you find where an otherwise intelligent person has acted irrationally?

[4] Are there particular experiences or situations that make irrational thinking and/or behavior more likely?

[5] What sorts of situations get us thinking about our own intelligence as we make decisions and take choices for ourselves?

* Intelligence seems to be about how much we can process in a given amount of time; rationality has to do with how well we take in and process information to come to reasonable conclusions and take effective actions.