

Social Representations of Intelligence, Gabriel Mugney and Felice Carugati, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989 (xi + 196pp, US\$59.50 hbk, ISBN 0 521 33348 2).

This book presents the results of an innovative research study which explores conceptions of intelligence. The book is one in the series "European Monographs in Social Psychology".

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Chapter 1 presents a review of theories and approaches to the concept of intelligence, while Chapter 2 outlines the research methodology used in the study. The research results, which are subject to very sophisticated statistical analyses, are presented in Chapters 3 through 8 and are discussed in Chapter 9.

The book begins with the question "Is there such a thing as intelligence? Intelligence, with a capital 'I', is a cultural creation which is central to modern society but which varies according to the historical period, latitude and social circumstances"(pl). The authors then go on to review various approaches and definitions of intelligence and higher cognitive processes, and they point out that most theories of intelligence define it as adaptation to the physical environment. Mugby and Carugati view intelligence as adaptation to the social environment.

In the model proposed by Mugney and Carugati cognitive development is mediated by symbolic and actual social interactions which result in mental constructions of logical operations and social awareness of self, the social world, values, etc. The research was based on a questionnaire, 1 000 32 page questionnaires were mailed to trainee teachers, teachers, parents, non-parents, and adults of varied occupations. The statistical analyses were completed on 728 questionnaires. Subjects were asked about their definitions of intelligence, concepts of the development of intelligence, image of an intelligent child, ideas about difficult children, and what school subjects could be used to assess intelligence.

The data analysis showed that different groups of subjects perceived intelligence differently. Comparisons between non-parents and parents, teacher trainees and teachers, and teachers without children and teachers with children, showed that an evolution took place in definitions of intelligence. The first view was that some children were inherently gifted. This view obviously removed responsibility for the child's performance away from parents and teachers. The second view was that intelligence is engaging in socially acceptable behaviour, and the final view was that intelligence is high achievement in certain specific subjects in school.

The results, taken as a whole, show that concepts of intelligence evolve and become structured in accordance with everyday events. On the one hand, people construct a social universe which is mentally intelligible, and on the other hand they construct a social and personal identity which is compatible with the requirements and norms of their social group.

This book will be of interest to social, cognitive and developmental psychologists, as well as educationists and sociologists. A background in theories of cognitive development is necessary in order to fully appreciate the book, and an understanding of sophisticated statistical techniques is desirable but not a prerequisite.

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