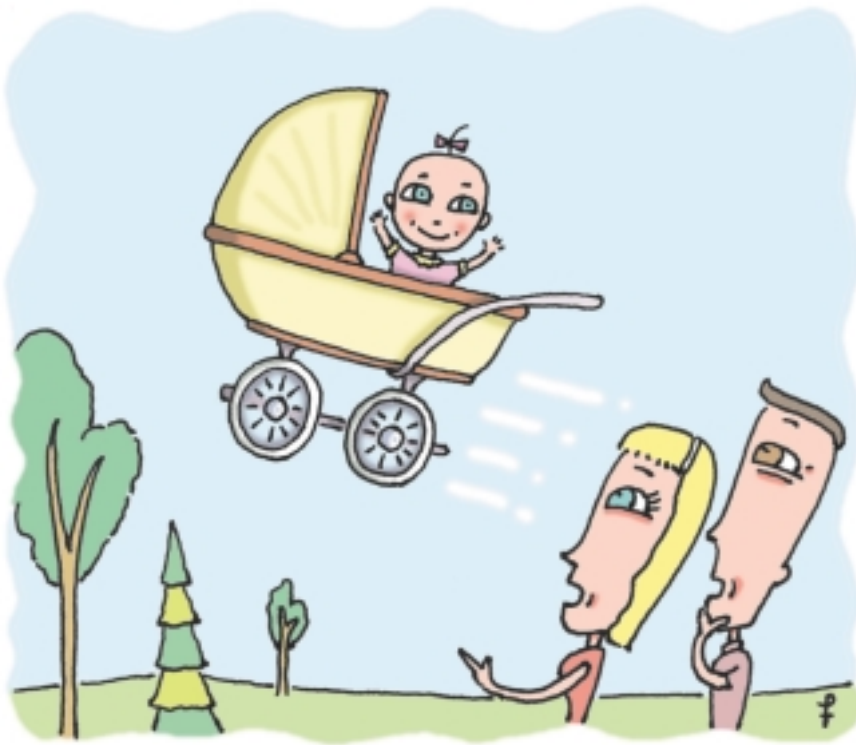


NEWS YOU CAN USE



Why We're Smarter

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

The classic question of nature versus nurture has been resolved—or so it seems from a recent article in *Psychological Review*, published by the American Psychological Association.

For decades, scientists have pondered the question of whether environment or genetics is the crucial factor in explaining differences between people such as intelligence.

Some said environment plays the bigger part; others said genes do. But no one offered a definitive answer.

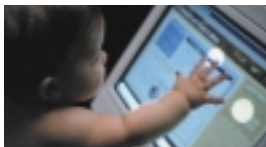
Evidence from IQ studies seemed to conflict: Twins separated at birth retain similar IQs, suggesting that environment plays only a minimal role. However, IQ scores measured over time indicate that younger generations are outscoring older

ones by nine to 20 points. That discovery would seem to suggest that environment is a powerful factor. Thus, a paradox has existed since researcher James Flynn discovered the IQ rise in younger generations, now called the Flynn effect, in 1987.

But the paradox may exist no more. In their *Psychological Review* article, Flynn and William Dickens, senior

Illustration by Paul Fisch

(Nature + nurture) x social multiplier = We're sharper than our parents.



Want to test your IQ? Try these (not scientifically accurate) tests for fun:

www.bookrags.com/iqtest
www.iqtest.com
test3.thespark.com/iqtest

fellow at the Brookings Institution, explain that it's not nature *or* nurture that determines our intelligence, but nature *and* nurture. In other words, both genes and environment play a role in shaping our cognitive abilities, and the roles of both are closely intertwined. Genetics may offer a person a slight advantage, but that advantage is greatly magnified by the way the person relates to his or her environment.

For example, if you're born with an IQ that's slightly higher than average, you'll tend to enjoy school, reading, puzzles, and learning in general. So, you'll spend time in those activities and add modest gains to your already higher-than-average IQ.

That process continues: Because of your cognitive gains, you'll study more, spend time with high-performing friends, ask adults questions, and engage in other activities that will increase your IQ. Thus, the small genetic advantage you started with is multiplied many times over.

The process works in reverse if you start life with a small cognitive disadvantage. You may not enjoy learning, so you might shirk the activities that would challenge and increase your mental abilities.

But why the large gain in IQs over generations? The authors' theory of the "social multiplier" suggests that as people's cognitive ability and performance level rises, the group average increases,

which motivates more people to try to improve their ability and performance. So, even small gains in people's IQs can become large social forces in a fairly short period of time.

Though the authors don't pinpoint specific causes for IQ gains, they do suggest several possibilities. Across-the-board increases in IQ could be triggered by such factors as the increasing complexity of industrialized jobs, additional leisure time spent on activities that

stretch people's mental abilities, technology that requires brain power, or smaller families in which children receive more time and attention.

Any of those factors, though having small effects initially, would be widespread enough to set off the social-multiplier effect. When people around you are engaging in mentally challenging activities, it's likely that you will as well.

[Sources/Newsweek, the Brookings Institution, Psychological Review](#)

RealityCheck

Texas Rangers shortstop Alex Rodriguez recently signed a contract guaranteeing him \$25.2 million a year for the next 10 years.

Try this calculator to find out how long it would take A-Rod to bring home your pay.

Let's just say he could make this editor's annual salary in less than a day.

www.dallasnews.com/popup/arodpay.htm

Thread A series of messages on a particular topic posted in a discussion forum.

E-Learning Terms of the Month

Whiteboard An electronic version of a dry-erase board that enables learners in a virtual classroom to view what an instructor, a presenter, or another learner writes or draws. Also called a smartboard.

More terms like this:

 WWW.LEARNINGCIRCUITS.ORG/GLOSSARY.HTML

News Flash



Does the idea of teaching online make you want to jump out of a window? Help is at hand from two institutions of higher ed.

New York University and its for-profit subsidiary, NYUonline, are jointly developing a **Certificate in Online Corporate Instruction**, which will be launched this fall.

The 35-hour program will be taught entirely online, mainly through synchronous sessions. Trainers will learn how to

- design online training materials
- blend classroom and Web-based teaching strategies
- incorporate graphics and multimedia for interactivity
- facilitate online discussions and knowledge sharing
- assess student performance.

People who have less time can take a 20-hour, **train-the-trainer course** that offers much of the same material, minus the component on instructional design for asynchronous learning.

NYU notes that its program will focus on teaching skills, not technology.

If a master's degree is more your

speed, Jones International University is now offering what it deems "the world's first fully online **master's of education in e-learning**." Jones, the first accredited virtual university, offers six different concentrations for the e-learning M.Ed:

- corporate training and knowledge management
- technology and design
- global leadership and administration
- research and assessment
- library and resource management
- e-learning generalist.

 www.nyuonline.com and www.jonesinternational.edu/MEd

*Send press releases or short articles on news, trends, and best practices to **News You Can Use**, T+D, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043. Email ny-cu@astd.org.*