Intelligence and How to Get It: Why Schools and Cultures Count by Richard E. Nisbett

A bold refutation of the belief that genes determine intelligence. Who are smarter, Asians or Westerners? Are there genetic explanations for racial differences in test scores? What makes some nationalities excel in engineering and others in music? Will math and science remain a largely male preserve. From the damning research of The Bell Curve to the more recent controversy surrounding geneticist James Watsons statements, one factor has been consistently left out of the equation: culture. In the tradition of The Mismeasure of Man by Stephen Jay Gould, world-class social psychologist Richard E. Nisbett takes on the idea of intelligence as something that is biologically determined and impervious to culture—with vast implications for the role of education as it relates to social and economic development. Intelligence and How to Get It asserts that intellect is not primarily genetic but is principally determined by societal influences. Nisbetts commanding argument, superb marshaling of evidence, and fearless discussions of the controversial carve out new and exciting terrain in this hotly debated field.

My Personal Review: Nisbetts book should be read by those who, most probably wont. Like Like Nisbett I fully believed that intelligence was completely a product of genes. I was wrong. Not only does he prove this conclusively he also gives an excellent analysis of the state of educational research. His explanations of the role statistical analysis should be read by anyone planning to use it. It is far from a math book. It explains the use and meaning of statistical analysis very well. I have never seen such a detailed exposition of multiple regression which is often abused. At a minimum every educator
particularly those in the early grades should read it with great care. The book also shows the direction new studies should take as well as how to greatly improve the effectiveness of our schools.

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