

This Week's Citation Classic

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Hunt J M. *Intelligence and experience*. New York: Ronald, 1961. 416 p.

This book assembled the evidence against the beliefs that intelligence is essentially fixed and that development is predetermined by each individual's heredity. The evidence supported plasticity in development and suggested that, once the adaptive interaction between young individuals and their environmental circumstances are better understood, it should be possible to increase the average level of intelligence within the population substantially, as then and now measured, by something like 30 points of IQ. [The *Science Citation Index*[®] (*SCI*[®]) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*[™] (*SSCI*[™]) indicate that this book has been cited over 490 times since 1961.]

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"The first draft of this book was originally written in the summer of 1957 as a chapter for an intended book on behavioral science and child rearing. I undertook the latter book because I learned while serving as director of the Institute of Welfare Research at the Community Service Society of New York that the counsel given to parents by professional people varied radically. When I suggested that someone should examine the literature of the behavioral sciences for empirical evidence relevant to assertions about child rearing, Donald Young, then executive director of the Russell Sage Foundation, agreed and encouraged me to do it with Sage support.

"Because of my background in psychopathology and personality development in the theoretical terms of a synthesis of behaviorism with psychoanalysis, I had expected to focus on the emotional and motivational aspects of psychological development. But, I was committed to a serious scrutiny of the investigative literature. That scrutiny greatly altered my beliefs about what is important in early experience,¹ demonstrated for me the inadequacy of the drive theory shared by Hullian behavior theory and psychoanalysis,² and reversed my beliefs that the rate of cognitive development is largely set by heredity and that intelligence is fixed. "When it became evident that the chapters of the intended book were each approaching book length, I focused, in the spring of 1960, with support from the Commonwealth Fund, on revising and elaborating the chapter on the development of intelligence which I defined as the adaptive abilities, habits, knowledge, and skills which can be observed and measured. My task was to focus the evidence against the beliefs in fixed intelligence and predetermined development and to indicate the implications. In *The Children's Cause*, C.Y. Steiner has credited this book with a share of the influence on the decision of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson to launch Project Head Start.³ Subsequent research, some of it my own,⁴ has shown the empirical 'range of reaction' to rearing conditions to be even greater than I had expected. The new evidence thereby fortifies the thesis of this book, yet arguments based on evidence from 'heritability' indices from such as Arthur Jensen sustain the old debate over the relative potency of heredity and environment."

1. Hunt J M. Developmental psychology: early experience. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* **30**:103-43, 1979.
2. Hunt J M. Intrinsic motivation and its role in psychological development. *Nebr. Symp. Motiv.* **13**:189-282, 1965.
3. Steiner G Y. *The children's cause*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1976. 265 p.
4. Hunt J M, Mohandessi K, Ghodssi M & Akiyama M. The psychological development of orphanage reared infants: interventions with outcomes (Tehran). *Genet. Psychol. Monogr.* **94**:177-226, 1976.