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The relationship between date of birth and individual differences in personality and general intelligence: A large-scale study

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Abstract

We investigated the relationship between date of birth and individual differences in personality and intelligence in two large samples. The first sample consisted of 4000+ middle-aged male subjects from the Vietnam Experience Study; personality was measured by the MMPI items converted to EPQ (scales) and a large battery of cognitive tests were factored to derive general intelligence, *g*. The second sample consisted of 11,000+ young adults from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth from 1979. *g* was extracted from the ten subtests of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery.

In no cases did date of birth relate to individual differences in personality or general intelligence.

A further goal was to test Eysenck's notion of possible relationships between date of birth and the popular Sun Signs in astrology. No support could be found for such associations.

We conclude that the present large-scale study provides no evidence for the existence of relevant relationships between date of birth and individual differences in personality and general intelligence.

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1. Introduction

Several studies have investigated the relationship between date of birth and individual differences in personality or general intelligence but, in general, these studies are based on small sample sizes. Only a couple of newer studies by Chotai, Forsgren, Nilsson, and Adolfsson (2001) and by Chotai, Lundberg, and Adolfsson (2003), operate with appropriate sample sizes (i.e. 2130 and 1145 subjects, respectively). The present study circumvents the inherent problems with small samples by combining two unusually large populations to a total of more than 15,000 subjects. To optimise the chances of finding even remote relationships between date of birth and individual differences in personality and intelligence we further applied two different strategies. The first one was based on the common chronological concept of time (e.g. month of birth and season of birth). The second strategy was based on the (pseudo-scientific) concept of astrology (e.g. Sun Signs, The Elements, and astrological gender), as discussed in the book “Astrology: Science or superstition?” by Eysenck and Nias (1982).

A thorough review of the scientific literature is beyond the scope of this article since the voluminous literature dates back to the forties, but it is worth noting that many relationships have been established between date of birth and normal intelligence, personality, and also with psychiatric diseases and differences in physical attributes (Chotai et al., 2001; Joinson & Nettle, 2005). This present study limits itself to examining associations between date of birth, personality, and general intelligence.

1.1. Intelligence

A series of articles suggest that subjects born during spring or summer are significantly more intelligent than subjects born during the rest of the year, though the differences are small (e.g. Bibby, Lamb, Leyden, & Wood, 1996; Eysenck, 1995; Eysenck & Nias, 1982; Pintner & Forlano, 1943). We found no post-1996 studies suggesting that date of birth is related to intelligence, but based on the early reports we expected to find a small but significant difference in intelligence in favour of subjects born during the spring or summer time.

1.2. Personality

A complete review of this topic is also beyond the scope of the present report so, with one exception, we emphasise studies from the past decade.

Forlano and Ehrlich (1941) studied the relationship between date of birth and personality and found that subjects scoring high on Extraversion (E) and low on Neuroticism (N) were more prone to be born during the colder months of the year. Gupta (1992) used the Hindi version of the EPI on 104 subjects (27–38 years of age) and the I₆ reports that people born during the summer score higher on Neuroticism than subjects born during winter or autumn, and lower on Impulsiveness than subjects born during spring and autumn. Moreover, subjects born during summer and winter appeared more Venturesome than subjects born during spring or autumn.

Chichilenko and Barbarash (2001) studied 154 male 17–20 year old young adults and found that those born during winter, in general, scored significantly higher on Neuroticism N than those born during autumn, who again scored significantly higher than those born during summer. The

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