

INSIGHT

The Journal of the Titan Society
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Editorial

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In this issue I include (1) Chris Cole's suggestion for on-line communication among members, (2) a letter from Kevin Langdon (who, like myself, has created high-ceiling intelligence tests for adults and has founded higher-IQ-societies) commenting on issue #8 of Insight, (3) the response of new member Richard May to the questionnaire in issue #7, and (4) ratings of the suggested names for the Society in issue #8.

In a future issue I will include (1) all the responses to the questionnaire in issue #8 (aside from the name rankings given in this issue), (2) an excerpt from an article that appeared in the New York Times of January 27, 1987 in the "Science Times" section where my Mega Test is briefly mentioned, and (3) an abstract of my doctoral dissertation.

The Titan Society On-Line?

Chris Cole
2240-314 Park Newport Drive
Newport Beach, CA 92660

I wish to report on my initial research into ways of expanding the Society, a problem I have encountered and a proposed solution. The question asked by several prospective members is: What do I get out of joining the Society? The ability to communicate with people of outstanding intellect is attractive, but the medium of monthly newsletters or annual meetings is not. These people typically have access on a daily basis to highly talented coworkers, or on a weekly basis to graduate seminars, visiting lecturers, etc. While the level of this contact will not be up to the intellectual level the Society can offer, this factor is more than offset by the frequency of contact. I also feel frustrated in not being able to communicate more readily with the members of the Society.

This is after all the Age of Communications, and there are potentially several solutions to this problem. I would like to propose that we try one of them. I can be contacted via several networks, two of which are available at very low cost and may be accessible to enough members to make a Titan Network possible. As an experiment, I would like all members who can to send me messages with return addresses over either of the following networks:

USNET: **decvax!hplabs:felix:peregrine:chris**
TELEX: **9102407000 peregrine sys uq**

I will report next month on the responses I receive to this request. By the way, if there are other candidate networks I have not thought of, please tell me about them. I can be reached at the above addresses or by phone at (714) 855-3923 (work) or (714) 720-1761 (home).

P.O. Box 795
Berkeley, CA 94701

January 23, 1987

Dear Ron,

Thank you for Insight #8. I have a few comments.

I don't think much of the suggestions Chris Cole reports for dealing with cheating; they're not really practical. So far I haven't run into serious problems along these lines, but I recall your discovery of a probable collaboration between two testees on the Mega Test and I can't say for sure that this hasn't happened many times and not been detected.

Eric Hart's essay is interesting, though he uses too many fancy words for my taste.

The aleatoric aspect of multiple-choice tests is well understood; such tests are generally considered highly suspect if they contain fewer than 40 items, due to the relative size of expected statistical fluctuations in relation to total scores. Reverse-solubility is a problem only if the test designer is lazy and does not provide plausible distractors.

I agree that it is legitimate to look for a variable or variables behind the concept of intelligence as it is commonly understood, just as astronomers may examine a newly-discovered patch of light before they have sufficient data to assign it to a definite class of objects for which physical models exist.

While it is true that many of the correlations between what are often referred to as "home brew" I.Q. tests and the standard, supervised tests are rather low, there are other tests of the latter type which consistently show respectable (by the relatively weak standards of psychometrics) correlations with the new, untimed tests, like the LAIT and the Mega Test; examples include the GRE and the Terman Concept Mastery (which is usually given untimed but is supervised and is generally completed within 75 minutes).

It is interesting to note that all of the members of Titan whose questionnaires are included in Insight #8 are professional programmers or systems analysts. The one thing in the real world that the ability to perform well on I.Q. tests surely correlates with is programming ability.

I see that one of the questions you're asking members of Titan is how much a subscription should cost. I think this is not so much a matter of opinion as of the cost of production and mailing. Generally, the budget of a High-I.Q. society can be supplemented somewhat by charging, say, half again the cost involved; a higher subscription fee tends to reduce the potential revenue. Anyway, I'm enclosing \$5 until this matter is clarified.

Some of the suggestions on your list of possible names for the society are strongly contraindicated for a number of reasons. Esemplastic is rather cumbersome. Lakh has already been used. Savant Society has unfortunate personal overtones and has already been the butt of much ridicule and an embarrassment to Marilyn Mach vos Savant. Delphi, Avatar, Prajna, and Samadhi have mystical connotations. Avatar, Paragon, Paramount, Samadhi Society, Savant Society, The Cerebrators, Society of Cerebrators, and, to some extent, Socratic Society, rely on praise words and open the society to charges of arrogance. Esemplastic and Athenic are adjectival forms (and Alembic appears to be, though it is not); this problem could be avoided by using The [Name] Society.

Perhaps the pool of possible names could be augmented by words drawn from science; the present list is strongly oriented toward classical literature. My personal favorite of the names listed is Eidos. But The Titan Society is not bad; I don't think you need to be in a hurry to change it.

The difficulty with the use of I.Q. tests to identify those likely to make major intellectual contributions to mankind is that those busy making contributions rarely have the time to take adult tests. It has already been established that childhood I.Q. tests, in their present form, do not predict outstanding intellectual performance in later life.

It's interesting that you're thinking about founding a chain of high-I.Q. societies with different cutoff levels. I considered doing something similar myself, some years ago, but decided that it would not sit well with the members of the lower-level groups and that it would be better for the societies to remain independent of one another. I suspect that an arrangement like this would eventually lead to a revolt and secession--and we both know there's a precedent for that.

Also, using only your own tests will put you at a competitive disadvantage with respect to societies with a more catholic admissions policy. Members of these societies don't care what test another member took; what they want is a group large enough to be interesting. Look at Mega; it's practically dead because there's no material in the Megarian.

I agree that it would be better to wait for publication of your next test to start any new societies. It's better to launch a few successful projects than a lot of false starts.

A sample of 120 data points is a bit small for a norming study, but I'll have to make do with fewer than that for the Four Sigma Qualifying Test; less than 60 people have taken it so far.

Sincerely,

Kevin Langdon
Kevin Langdon

(Editor's Comment: I will have more to say about the proposed "chain of high-IQ societies" in a later issue. I prefer to stick to my own tests because I'm fairly sure of their quality. Few other tests of good quality exceed the 99.999 percentile in ceiling for adults. As for the Mega Society, it used a large number of tests and is a chaotic mess largely for that reason.)

Questionnaire Response

Name: Richard May

Address: 463 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02115

Day phone: (617) 266-0874 (4:15-6:00 p.m. M-F; 11:15 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Sat.)

Evening phone: (617) 266-6748 (esp. 10:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m. Eastern Time)

Occupation: Various, including real estate management and consulting on puzzles.

Hobbies or interests: Heuristics, etymology, logology, psychometrics, nutrition, classical "mysticism", and designing abstract, strategic board games.

Are you satisfied with the name "Titan Society"? No. Webster's Third states "characterized by...immense brute strength, and primitive force and appetite rather than intelligence and morality."

Alternate name suggestion: Epimetheus (Society): literally "after-thinker; the brother of Prometheus and husband of Pandora, given the task by the gods of making man and the animals and distributing the various faculties to them.

Able and willing to attend meeting of Titan Society in Southern Calif. in 1987: Able: maybe; willing: yes.

Miscellaneous remarks: "Recruiting" at the "10⁻⁵" level may be extremely difficult, but the "optimal" size of the Society may be rather small.

Ratings of Suggested Names for the Titan Society

(Name)	(Hart)	(Ward)	(Wise)	(May)	(Oels)	(Inada)	(Total)
Noetic	+2	+3	+3	+5	+4	0	+17
Sentinel	+2	+4	+2	0	+1	0	+8
Delphi	+3	+1	0	-1	+4	0	+7
Eidos	+1	-2	-2	+5	+4	0	+6
Prajna	+1	+2	+4	0	-1	-1	+5
Enosis	0	+1	-2	0	+4	0	+3
Eidolon	+4	+1	-2	-1	+1	-1	+2
Kalon	+3	0	-2	0	0	-1	0
Logos	+1	+5	-2	-5	+1	0	0
Quivira	0	0	-2	---	+1	0	-1
Alembic	+3	0	-2	-5	+1	0	-3
Avatar	+3	0	-2	-5	+1	-1	-4
Socratic	+2	-2	+2	-1	-4	-2	-5
Lukh	-5	-2	-2	+2	0	+1	-6
Titan	+4	-4	0	-1	-5	-1	-7
Athenic	+2	-2	-2	-5	0	0	-7
Paramount	0	-3	-1	0	-1	-2	-7
Epsilon	+3	+1	+5	0	0	-2	-7
C	+2	-5	-2	-1	-2	+1	-7
Philomel	+1	-3	-2	-5	+2	-1	-8
Kesemplastic	-3	-2	-2	0	-1	-1	-9
Paragon	0	-5	-1	0	-1	-2	-9
Plum	-2	-2	-2	-1	-2	0	-9
Savant	0	+1	0	-5	-4	-2	-10
Societas Minervae	+3	-4	-2	-5	-1	-1	-10
Samadhi	-1	0	0	-5	-3	-2	-11
The Cerebrators	0	-5	-2	0	-4	-2	-13
Society of Cerebrators	-4	-5	-2	0	-4	-2	-17