



Transcript of episode 69:

Sifting Through IQ: What We Know About Intelligence

Emily Kircher-Morris: Hey there. Welcome to episode 69. I'm Emily Kircher-Morris. Today we're talking to Dr. Russell Warne. He's the author of the book *In the Know: Debunking 35 Myths About Human Intelligence*, which is currently available for pre-order and is going to be released at the end of the month. I had a chance to preview it and I found it fascinating. So I'm really looking forward to sharing this interview.

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Coming up next.

Russell Warne: Hi, I'm Dr. Russell T. Warne. I'm an associate professor of psychology at Utah Valley University and the author of the new book *In the Know: Debunking 35 Myths About Human Intelligence* published by Cambridge University Press.

Emily Kircher-Morris: Stay with us.

(break)

We are talking today with Dr. Russell Warne. He's the author of a new book called *In the Know: Debunking 35 Myths About Human Intelligence*. I can't wait to get into this subject with you so thanks so much for being here.

Russell Warne: Thanks for having me.

Emily Kircher-Morris: Let's start out real quickly and tell us a little bit about your background and what got you to your interest in intelligence and psychology along with that.

Russell Warne: Majored as a psychology major in my undergrad years. I always knew I wanted to be a psychologist, um, for my adolescence or so by age about 14. But like most teenagers, I thought that the only thing psychologist did was therapy. So when I took an abnormal psych class as an 18 year old undergraduate, they had us volunteer at a local inpatient mental health facility, and I knew within 15 minutes that I did not want do therapy.

I loved the major. I loved learning about people. I loved learning, uh, about how people think. And so I stuck with it. And then I discovered the testing world. I took an undergraduate class about psychological testing and much to my surprise I liked it. Most people in the major didn't. And I decided I wanted to go into a field that would, um, merge that with my, my interest in education. And so I chose educational psychology with an emphasis in the testing world.

And while I was doing that at Texas A & M for graduate school, I had to take a class on giftedness intelligence and creativity. That's what it was called. And my professor had us read that stuff. I found it interesting, and she was on my dissertation committee and she had me read more and she put me on this path, and fast forward nine years after the PhD and then suddenly I've written a book about it.

Emily Kircher-Morris: I was really fascinated by the book. I was able to preview it and, and read through it. And this is always an area I think of that I'm very interested in as well, but it is a topic that can be confusing and it can be difficult to sort through the noise with a lot of information, especially for people who maybe haven't never taken a statistics course.

I mean, there's just a lot of stuff that goes into it and we try to boil it down to these little soundbites about stuff, and then people don't really understand it. So I think this will be a fascinating conversation for our audience. Let's just start off kind of where you start in your book and talking about the difference between intelligence and the concept of G, which I don't know if that's, is that how you say it verbally?

Russell Warne: It's a single letter, lowercase g. That's how, that's how the people who are in the field often talk about intelligence, but there is a difference between the two, as you, as you stated.

G is what we get from a statistical procedure called factor analysis. Factor analysis, to boil it down. It's just the procedure where we take a bunch of data, a bunch of variables, we throw it into a computer and the computer spits it back out and says, here are groups of variables that are more closely related to each other, they cluster together. And, and variables within that group are really strongly related, much more so than they are to variables outside the group. And different methods will produce different results, too technical to get into here. But when we put cognitive data and we ask people to solve problems on tests, We tend to find that almost always, there's just one single group of variables that the factor analysis results says that all of these variables are correlated enough. Everyone's performance on these tests, these tasks, is so correlated that it represents just one group of variables. And so we call that a group a factor.

And the term g is an abbreviation for general factor. It's the idea that the same ability that causes someone to do well on, for example, a vocabulary test also on average helps them to do better on a 3d rotation task, where they're shown an object and have to say what it would look like if it were rotated in three-dimensional space.

And this has been a consistent result in psychology for, for over 115 years. And g is just this term we get to this general factor. Now, whether g is the same as what our culture calls

intelligence is a very legitimate debate and argument. I have some colleagues who say that intelligence is g plus everything else that helps people solve problems. And, and there are other abilities to help people solve problems. I have other colleagues who say no, g is a statistical product. Intelligence is something in people's heads. These aren't the same. There's value to separating those when you're talking about certain topics that get very technical. But for the purposes of the book, I say, look, it's this general problem solving ability helps us do everything cognitive. If it looks like a duck, sounds like a duck, walks like a duck, it's probably intelligence. If g is not intelligence, it's probably something very much like it.

And so I use the terms interchangeably in most of the book, but I recognize that I have colleagues who disagree with that. And it's just a disagreement about definitions and things like that. And we always have those in the social science.

Emily Kircher-Morris: We like to, uh, we like to debate the minutia with some of those things. And the big picture, like you said, is they're very closely related. And so g is the measurement, how we measure a person's intelligence, and that's kind of the general consensus.

Russell Warne: I would say so I would say so. What factor analysis does in addition to grouping variables together is, it filters out stuff that's unique to each variable. So the fact that for a Tetris-like task, you don't really need language once you understand what to do. But for a vocabulary task, you definitely need language. The unique language component vocabulary gets filtered out. The unique visual component of the Tetris task it's filtered out of that task, and what they have in common is g . Again, I could go on splitting hairs for a while, but for most people, most non-experts, if g is not intelligence, it's something pretty close to it.

Emily Kircher-Morris: One of the other pieces that goes along with that conversation about intelligence and g and what are we really talking about there is the concept that perhaps what we view as intelligence here in our country or in our culture might vary. And I found extremely fascinating one of the studies that you shared in the book, which is a study that you conducted, which showed that g is evident in multiple cultures throughout the country, or I'm sorry, throughout the world. So I would love it for you to elaborate on that and tell us a little bit about your findings.

Russell Warne: This is where distinguishing between intelligence and, and g is valuable, and I do that when I described that study in the book. Because g is just the statistical product, it's independent of any cultural definition. Whereas the word intelligence has a lot of baggage for good or for ill. And it doesn't necessarily mean the same thing in different cultures, and really it's not realistic to expect it to mean the same thing in different cultures. I just don't think that that's a plausible belief that you can have that this word will always translate and mean the same thing. And refer to the same collection of valued abilities or tasks that someone can accomplish. So my then-student Cassidy Burningham and I, we looked for as many data sets as we could find from non-Western nations that were, um, economically less developed. And we did that because we thought if g is this cultural, culturally laid-in

construct, if intelligence is not the same thing across different cultures, let's try to see if we can find g in the places that are the least like Western developed nations as we can.

And we eventually found, um, 97 archival data sets from 31 of these nations and they're in South America, Central America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab world, South Asia, Oceania, basically anywhere that's not majority European, uh, and not economically developed, we found at least some data. And we ran the factor analysis and in, in over 95% of the data sets, we found g. Even though there are important differences in what cultures see as intelligent behavior, and even though there are important differences in what the word intelligence might mean, that statistical abstraction, the g, that's present, there seems to be one broad ability that people worldwide use to solve cognitive problems.

Some of these data sets, the people who originally collect them, had no intention of ever finding g, they were collected for a wide variety of purposes. Some of them were collected by people who are against g theory and have written strongly against it, and yet their own data shows it. And we thought that was a pretty strong indictment that this result that you get in Western countries where you get one factor, and there's probably one ability that helps people solve all sorts of problems, it's probably worldwide. I would love people to gather more data cross-culturally to try to disprove that because I feel like the more data we have from all over the world from as many cultures as possible, the more we learn about humanity in general.

Emily Kircher-Morris: Do you recall some of the tasks from some of those different cultures that they were using? I'm curious about what those looked like and how they differed from the things we use here to measure intelligence.

Russell Warne: Most of them were adaptations of the sort of tasks we use in the Western world, which, which shouldn't surprise you. We have over a century of trying to measure this ability. So if you are trying to create a new test for your culture, wouldn't you look to experienced sources?

But there were some that were new. One of my favorites was, was almost sounds bizarre and describe it. It was like a plexiglass box where if you put your head in it, the light's diffused, you can't see what direction the light's coming from. The box could be tilted, so you knew, the exact angle... the research knew the exact angle the box is tilted when someone's head's in it. And they could also see a bar, a metal bar in it, and the person's head would be tilted and the bar would be tilted at a different angle, and the person had to move a device to change the bar till it was at true vertical. So their head might be tilted, but they still have to identify where true vertical is.

That is the most bizarre task I have ever seen in a psychological study. Uh, just building the plexiglass box, like how you convince someone to fund that? And there were other ones. Um, some of them were, were tasks about, uh, culturally relevant knowledge about local plants and, and animals, what they're useful for, things like that.

And some of these tasks, like I said, don't resemble the tasks we put on intelligence tests in the United States. And yet when you do the factor analysis, you still get one broad factor.

And it's just as strong as what we see in Western cultures. And, and my student, we were actually surprised. We thought there'd be some results that wouldn't produce one factor, and there were a couple, there were three data sets out of 97.

Emily Kircher-Morris: I think something that, as people grow their understanding of intelligence or IQ, and especially a lot of our audience are educators and parents of gifted kids, also twice exceptional kids. One of the trends quite often, especially related to identifying either diverse students, culturally, or also twice exceptional students, is that we're taking, I think the WISC is probably the one that we use the most often that most people are familiar with, so we've got that full-scale IQ, and then we've got these composite scores that you refer to in the book as stratum two scores. So we've got, you know, verbal comprehension, fluid reasoning, visual, spatial, processing speed.

And I know that some schools are starting to use some of those composite scores in order to qualify some students that maybe their full-scale score wouldn't identify them for gifted services. And I'm very curious, although this wasn't in your book, but what do you think?

Russell Warne: I think the most important thing is that the program aligns with the identification procedure. If your gifted program is highly verbal, Oh, we're going to read more advanced books so it's going to be intensive writing program. You want to use a verbal sub score? Please! More power to you. It's probably more useful than the global IQ. If the program is going to be more global and interdisciplinary though, I imagine a grade skip is a good example, you're going to want either the global IQ or you're going to want to look at most, if not all, of the other scores.

To me, the exact score you use, or what test, is much less important than that the test content and what it measures aligns with whatever abilities we're going to develop in a gifted program. So if it's going to be a creativity program, throw the IQ test out completely. Let's give a creativity test. If it's going to be an artistically gifted program, then let's do an audition to see how, how well students sing or play an instrument or act or paint. I don't think that there's any one score that will work for all programs. And I think the best scores are whatever aligns with what you're going to do, because when you select students on one measure and you put them in a gifted program that doesn't align with their strengths, at best, there's going to be some frustration at worst you get people dropping out, you get kids second guessing their abilities. So to me, which score you use much less relevant than that there's alignment.

Emily Kircher-Morris: I see a lot of times, kids who are put in programs that don't align in all of those things that you were mentioning, those negative effects of being in a setting that causes more frustration, and isn't allowing your, your abilities to blossom, it's just forcing you to be in a setting where a lot of kids are way ahead of you, and you're really struggling to keep up. And I think that that is a difficult balance for programs to find, and sometimes I think maybe the program changes or maybe the testing changes and they haven't aligned everything again. And, and, you know, that's an important factor to consider.

Russell Warne: I think sometimes we don't need tests at all to identify kids for certain programs. Sometimes it's passion and interest that matter more. I've heard a story from

someone who said that when they were in elementary school, the gifted class got to put on a play for everyone else, and no one else got the opportunity to be in a play. And she was very interested in, in theater, but she didn't call for it for the gifted program. Now, I don't know what tests they use, but the idea that you have to pass a test to be able to participate in a play is absolutely completely and totally bonkers.

And so, you know, if your program is about enrichment it's, if it's athletic in nature, artistic in nature, and if there's room, why not let everyone who wants to and throw the test out the window?

Emily Kircher-Morris: So circling back to your book, one of the things that you talk about in the book in a variety of ways, is misinterpretations or myths, different ways that people misuse the concept of intelligence, and some of those that you mentioned, practical intelligence and emotional intelligence, you also mentioned some brain training programs. Talk a little bit about why we're clinging onto those concepts. Where do they come from, and what is the difficulty when we misinterpret what those really mean?

Russell Warne: That's another book. Uh, I haven't written that book yet. That's a complex question. I think one of the big reasons is that psychology has not done a very good job at disseminating this information.

I wish the book weren't necessary but I wrote it. We'll see how necessary the public thinks it is if they actually buy it. But psychology has not been very good at disseminating this information. And there's a variety of reasons for that. But I did a study where I examined Intro to Psychology textbooks, and over three quarters of them had some of these, these misconceptions. And I quoted some of those in the book.

If we can't even get our own textbooks right, how on earth should we expect lay people who haven't studied this for a living to get it right? And so I don't really blame society. I blame psychology more than, than anyone else.

Emily Kircher-Morris: That's fair.

Russell Warne: Classes on intelligence at either the undergraduate or graduate level are rare. And I think some of it is just because it does - and this is a problem we have in gifted ed too - it does sometimes become a little elitist because you end up saying here's an important variable that people want to do well on, and some people do better than others.

And unfortunately, for most people, we don't know how to raise intelligence permanently. At least people who already live in favorable environments and wealthy countries, we don't. And so it starts sounding elitist and that can make people very uncomfortable to teach about it, to disseminate it. And then when you add on top of it, that in the United States, we at least try to be very egalitarian. And one of our founding documents says all men are created equal. It's hard to get more egalitarian than that. At least in the ideals. And quite frankly, everyone, this includes scientists, are more excited to, to hold on to an idea that flatters their ideals and their hopes than one that says, no, you need to maybe temper that hope a little bit.

And so I think that a lot of these competing ideas, like emotional intelligence, flatter our sympathies. And I think that, um, they're very comforting. And we indulged them. And that's a very human thing to do. I don't blame society for doing that, and most of these ideas are not entirely without merit. I talk about that, um, their strengths in the book, but there is a lot of happy talk coming from psychologists, and then that spreads their society.

Emily Kircher-Morris: I thought you did a really nice job in the book talking about the benefits and, and what really we're talking about with some of those things, and then there's the conflation of IQ or intelligence with some of these other concepts. There's nothing about saying there's not value to all of those skills as well, but I liked how you were consistently going back to the research to say, what do we really know? What do we really understand about all of these concepts and what really makes a difference in people's lives?

Russell Warne: And there is value in some of these. Emotional intelligence is the perfect example. Emotions and being able to deal with them, both intrapersonally within yourself and interpersonally and managing your emotions and how they interact with other people's emotions, that's an important part of the human experience. By golly we need to be researching that! But where that idea has, has run away as it's gotten ahead of the research and it doesn't support a lot of the claims of people like Daniel Goldman, and his book from the nineties, saying that Oh, emotional intelligence is the most important thing at work and emotional intelligence gets you ahead in life. And can it influence it? Yeah, but hold on, let's pull it back. Let's see what the research says. And it's, it's not quite ready for prime time, although I'm really optimistic that we can do more to bridge the divide between cold hard thinking cognition and problem solving, and the rich emotional life that humans have.

Emily Kircher-Morris: You talk in the book a little bit about growth mindset, I think that kind of goes along with this. And I, I find that for me as a mental health counselor, the idea of growth mindset is great. What are we talking about? We're talking about cognitive behavioral therapy, right? And so, and that goes along with that emotional intelligence and you definitely have to have some of that resilience, but the idea that growth mindset can drastically change achievement, which a lot of people claim, the research doesn't support that.

Russell Warne: No, which is unfortunate and... because I wish that, that having a growth mindset did have massive improvements in children's academic achievement. I wish. Wishes don't get you anywhere, and it's really clear that the early research on growth mindset shows that the effects are greatly inflated. And to psychology's credit, we've really stepped up in the past nine years with the replication crisis, in improving the quality of our research. And inevitably, as the rigor of the research, as the methodological quality, goes up, the strength of the effects go down. And that's not just true with growth mindset. That's true with almost any thing in psychology. But growth mindset's been hit particularly hard. There've been, some studies have come out since I wrote the book showing that teaching a growth mindset does not improve educational achievement. The best ones seem to be in at-risk kids. There does seem to be a slight effect, but it's smaller than anything you would notice if you were a classroom teacher. It's the sort of thing you'd notice when you aggregate dozens or hundreds of scores together.

And it definitely has not lived up to the hype. To the credit of the proponents of growth mindset, they have toned down their rhetoric, but I think that the evidence is still not as strong. And, um, you know, I hate to be a sourpuss, but if you want to improve kids' math achievement, don't teach them that their mind, their abilities are flexible, teach them some math. That's what you should be spending time on if you want to raise achievement. It's not a sexy intervention but that seems to be more effective.

Emily Kircher-Morris: Anytime we're talking about IQ, there's always this feeling of not wanting to say the wrong thing. And part of that comes from the history, and Lewis Terman. And I know that you and, uh, Dr. Jennifer Jolly had planned and were working on a special edition of Gifted Quarterly, which is the journal through National Association for Gifted Children, about what we've learned since Terman was doing some of his studies and what the implications of some of those early studies were.

Talk to us a little bit about that process and what initiated that process. And then also, what then happened after you had already begun that process and gotten pretty well through most of it I think?

Russell Warne: Emily you're actually the first person who's ever asked me about that publicly. So this is your scoop. Uh, as far as how it happened, I've always had an interest in history and, and Dr. Jolly is a trained historian of education. She she's got the actual formal training and chops, I just like reading old dusty articles and books. So we had had our interests and we had published separately and we met in 2017 at the annual convention for the National Association for Gifted Children and we batted around this idea and we said, Hey, Lewis Terman's big famous longitudinal study of, of over 1500 gifted children, that's having its hundredth anniversary soon. Maybe if we plan now, we could have as a special issue of Gifted Child Quarterly come out in 2021.

The editors liked it. We went through the formal process for applying for a special issue for pitching that. There was a lot of revisions back and forth. There was some opposition about it after it had already gone through the normal channels that all special issues go for... that go through to get approved.

Emily Kircher-Morris: What were some of the things behind that concern?

Russell Warne: One of the biggest concerns was the idea that by publishing anything about Terman, that NAGC would be endorsing his views. Which, which I don't, I don't think is a reasonable position for, um, a scholarly journal or society to take because scholarly journals publish all sorts of things and the articles contradict each other, and no one seriously believes that scholarly societies completely a hundred percent endorse everything that's published in their journals. Editors are independent. So that, that was one thing.

And the reason why that was a problem is because Terman was involved in the early 20th century eugenics movement. A lot of people in gifted education at the time, including Leta Stetter Hollingworth, um, Guy Whipple, were involved in eugenics, and this was a social movement where people attempted to use biology, as it was known at the time, to try to improve the gene pool for future generations. And there were a wide variety of ways that people we'll

propose this. Some of them got off the ground, some of them didn't. Um, the person who originated the modern eugenics movement in the 1800s, Sir Francis Galton, he proposed the, a scheme that wouldn't work. He imagined that people would, um, when they decided that they wanted to get married, that they would go to be inspected medically and psychologically, to see if they had good traits that that should be passed on. They didn't know what genes were at the time, so he uses the language of traits. And that if you passed, you got a certificate. And then the idea was that, as you're trolling the dating market, you would flash the certificate to show you have good genes. I read that and I was like, Oh, buddy you clearly don't know, or didn't remember when you wrote this, what dating is really like. And then he thought that, um, people who, who had unfavorable traits that he didn't want passed on, um, should live in, he called a monasteries, uh, little communities where they'd be cared for, taken care of, they can contribute to society.

Neither of those ever happened. And this took a, eugenics took a wide variety of forms. Every country, it took a different form. Inevitably people who are politically powerful, economically dominant, inevitably, they discovered that they had the good genes that needed to be passed on. And the people who were downtrodden and marginalized in their country... well, those people tend to have genes that we don't want passed on. Isn't that just amazing that in every country, that's how that panned out? Uh, I'm rolling my eyes, if you can't tell.

And so different countries did different things. And in the United States, one way that this took shape was forced sterilizations. A majority of States in the United States at some point passed laws that allowed people, certain classes of people, to be sterilized against their will. And then though those laws were the inspiration for Germany's law for sterilization of 1933, which then of course starts the genocide of Jews and Roma people and others, um, that we now know as, as the Holocaust.

Because of that, eugenics, rightly so, is, is a dirty word. And a lot of the controversy around Terman and why people opposed a special issue was he was eugenesis. Which is correct, he was a eugenesisist. And so a lot of people thought, well, if we publish a special issue, we're endorsing Turmans eugenics. And I'd published an article that came out online in October, 2018, it appeared in print in Gifted Child Quarterly in January, 2019, where I talk about this. I don't, I don't minimize Terman's involvement in the eugenics movement. He called intelligence testing the beacon light of the eugenics movement. I mean, this was someone who was all in. But what Jennifer and I believe is that someone who is morally reprehensible can be scientifically right. And saints can be empirically wrong. You can agree with someone, whether they're living or dead, about one thing, without being forced to adopt all of their views.

And we thought that there was still some value in his work and that there was value in exploring it, because whether you like him or not, and there's good reasons not to, Lewis Terman is influential on gifted education today. And we thought that exploring that influence was valuable because the past is more dangerous if you allow its influence to operate covertly.

But by understanding the past, you're allowed to better shape how it influences the present and the future. And we wanted the special issue to be a way to explore that past, to interrogate it. That was one of the words we use. We wanted to interrogate it and subject it to very strict scrutiny, so that we can understand it and better decide what aspects from the past should we keep, what aspects should we throw out?

Um, it got to the point where, um, we got the proposals out, we had, um, quite a few manuscripts submitted. Five ended up being accepted. Um, I submitted one, it was rejected. Uh, so that tells you how tough it was to get in, the special editor couldn't even get his own, um, manuscript in. We didn't handle mine. Um, the normal Gifted Child Quarterly editors contracted out for an independent editor. But I mean, this was a rigorous peer review and five got accepted, and one of them was published online when NAGC, um, their board voted to kill the special issue completely, and that left these manuscripts in limbo. Because they've been accepted, they, they had already entered post-production, and in the following weeks after that decision, um, it was decided that all five, um, would make it in print. The first two, um, already have. All five are online and, um, the last three will appear in the January and April, 2021 issue. So the five articles are spread all across three issues.

Um, the introduction that Jennifer and I wrote would not appear in, in there. And, um, there were, there were a lot of hard feelings about this. Jennifer and I left NAGC, which was very heartbreaking for both of us. We had been members of it, each of us, for over 10 years. And it, it was unfortunate that people allowed what was sometimes an over-simplified view of the past.

Um, some of the reasons that people gave for opposing a special issue were, were just simply factually untrue. You know, the things they said about the past were factually untrue. Um, it was unfortunate that an oversimplified view of the past ended up robbing the field of a time to reflect on an important chapter, an important figure of its history.

And so, um, that, that I hope, um, is the full story without, you know, getting in too much detail, but the articles are out there. And Jennifer and I published our intro on, on a website that people can read. And so, um, the attempt at censorship really was, was not very successful. You know, all the articles got out. And even if our intro isn't in Gifted Child Quarterly, it's there. But it's unfortunate that NAGC decided that, that in violation of its own policies, in violation of publication ethics, and in breach of contract with their editors, that they took this move unilaterally, because now when you read Gifted Child Quarterly, or anything else from NAGC, you don't know if it's based on a full, open investigation of the data and analysis and discussion among scientists. You now have to always worry that ideology matters more than facts with NAGC.

Uh, you know, I left the organization very reluctantly. I wish them well in what they decide to do. I, I don't harbor bitterness, but I mourn for their reputation.

Emily Kircher-Morris: Thank you for kind of walking us through that. It's, it's an interesting, interesting situation and I think very symbolic of where we are right now, just in time.

Russell Warne: Oh yeah. And I recognize that we are at a sensitive time. Um, it's not hard to dig up racist quotes from Lewis Terman. You know, Leta Stetter Hollingworth was also a eugenicist. I don't know if NAGC is going to rename the Hollingworth Award. I have quotes on my blog of, of her say, you know, favoring sterilization.

So I recognize it, but to me, the best way to deal with controversy is to talk about it. And I don't know, I, in fact, I'm pretty sure that we wouldn't have reached a hundred percent consensus among all members in NAGC about, about these issues in the past, but at least we would have educated people and we would have had a better conversation. And I think there would have been more unity, had the scholarly inquiry allowed to progress. Instead, the unity now comes from basically people like me and Jennifer saying, I, I need inquiry, I need freedom as a scholar, I have to walk away. And that's unfortunate. I'd rather have unity from discussing something and coming to an understanding than to have unity from kicking people out and have everyone who remains agree with me.

Emily Kircher-Morris: Yeah.

Russell Warne: I appreciate for letting me tell that story. Like I said, um, I've never told it publicly.

Emily Kircher-Morris: I appreciate you sharing it. I know our time is short here, so I want to thank you so much for talking with us and I highly recommend your book. I really did enjoy it. It was, it was not too heavy of a read, just enough. Thank you so much for your time.

Russell Warne: You're welcome, Emily, I'm happy that you invited me and I appreciate you allowing me to ramble.

Emily Kircher-Morris: Let me start by saying that I believe the National Association for Gifted Children is an important and vital organization. The field of neurodiversity needs champions like NAGC, their free resources have turned lives around, and much of the progress that's been made in the gifted community is due to their efforts.

Full disclosure - I'm a lifetime member of NAGC and I'm the chair-elect of the Social and Emotional Committee for NAGC. But I do think that Dr. Warren's decision to part ways with NAGC over the Lewis Terman disagreement could use a little perspective. I can't help but see a parallel between that decision for him to leave, and NAGC's own decision to avoid featuring Dr. Terman because of his position on eugenics. Both decisions are motivated by ethical concerns. But perhaps, both are sort of throwing the baby out with the bath water too.

We have a troubling tendency to view history through a modern lens, instead of the lens of that time. Eugenics was a horrific concept by any measure, but it's easy to forget that it was once a pretty mainstream concept.

Listen to this quote: "It is better for all the world if, instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind." You can be forgiven for thinking that quote was Adolf Hitler, but you might be surprised to know it was actually US Supreme Court justice

Oliver Wendell Holmes. As perverse as it seems, many major figures of the period thought eugenics was some road to a better future for the species.

Today we recoil, rightly, at the thought. But back then it was pretty deeply ingrained in society. For instance, Alexander Graham Bell promoted eugenics. So do we now discourage schools from teaching about the telephone? How about Teddy Roosevelt? Should we stop calling stuffed animals Teddy bears, or strip him of his Nobel Peace Prize? Should we ignore the historical significance of Helen Keller? In 1915 she wrote in favor of refusing life-saving medical procedures for infants with mental impairments or physical deformities. For all of his faults, Lewis Terman was once the President of the American Psychological Association. As a psychologist at Stanford University, he was responsible for revising the Benet-Simon intelligence scale, thereby creating the Stanford-Benet. So do we stop using the Stanford-Benet intelligence test because of Dr. Turmans involvement?

We have to be able to separate the good ideas from the bad, and we have to regard history through the lens of that time. Otherwise we have to ignore the good work of people like George Bernard Shaw, Sir Winston Churchill, and... Lewis Terman. Like it or not, without him, the worlds of psychology and giftedness wouldn't be where they are today.

I understand the fear of elevating the legacy of someone so wrought with controversy. Perhaps the compromise of publishing the articles without dedicating a named issue after Terman was the best path forward. But the quote, "those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it" does come to mind. Questioning is key to finding the truth to anything.

What do we do about our tendency to cling to unproven concepts in the area of neurodiversity? How do we start having hard conversations about moving toward the light? Where do we draw the line, and when, between what we believe, and what real data and evidence tell us? I'm Emily Kircher-Morris. Thanks for listening. I'll see you next time on my matters.

Dave Morris: Thanks to Dr. Russell Warne. His new book, *In the Know: Debunking 35 Myths About Human Intelligence*, will be out before the end of October. You can find links to the book and to Russell's website on the episode 69 page at www.MindMattersPodcast.com. The views and opinions expressed by our guests are theirs alone, and don't necessarily reflect those of Mind Matters, our partners, supporters, or subsidiaries.

For Emily, I'm Dave Morris, Mind Matters' Executive Producer. Stay safe, stay healthy, see you next time.

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