On the Ordinary Concept of Intelligence

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Abstract

Attributions of intelligence affect political discourse (Hartman et al., 2023; Knöchelmann & Cohrs, 2024; Oktar & Lombrozo, 2026; Stanley et al., 2020), perceptions of animals' moral standing (Piazza et al., 2014; Ruby & Heine, 2012; Sytsma & Machery, 2012), and perceptions of AI (Joo, 2024; Ladak et al., 2024). Thus, it matters how people tend to attribute intelligence. The folk psychology of intelligence, however, does not figure prominently in discussions of folk psychology (Andrews, 2012; Fodor, 1987; Goldman, 2006; Nichols & Stich, 2003; Stich, 1983), and researchers have yet to extensively investigate this topic empirically. Here, we experimentally investigate whether people attribute intelligence differently across different types of activities and their practitioners, depending on whether the activities are intellectual or embodied. In three experiments, we find evidence for the Differential Use Hypothesis.

Keywords: intelligence; folk psychology; embodied activity; intellectual activity; experimental philosophy

Introduction

Attributions of intelligence affect political discourse (Hartman et al., 2023; Knöchelmann & Cohrs, 2024; Oktar & Lombrozo, 2026; Stanley et al., 2020), perceptions of animals' moral standing (Piazza et al., 2014; Ruby & Heine, 2012; Sytsma & Machery, 2012), and perceptions of AI (Joo, 2024; Ladak et al., 2024). Thus, it matters how people attribute it across different kinds of activities and their practitioners. The folk psychology of intelligence, however, does not figure prominently in discussions of folk psychology (Andrews, 2012; Fodor, 1987; Goldman, 2006; Nichols & Stich, 2003; Stich, 1983), and researchers have yet to extensively investigate this topic empirically. Here, we experimentally investigate whether people attribute intelligence differently across different types of activities and their practitioners.

According to a long philosophical tradition, 'intelligence' is appropriately applied only, or preferentially, to practitioners of intellectual activities. In the *Republic* (Book VI 509d–511e), Socrates describes psychological states as becoming clearer and more intelligent as one moves from the realm of embodied experiencing (lower intelligence) to the intellectual contemplation of forms (higher intelligence). In the *Philebus* (55d–56b), Socrates considers intellectual skills such as arithmetic and measurement as more intelligent since they are more precise than embodied skills such as farming or building. This kind of view extends to Aristotle. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (VI.8, 1143a35–b5), Aristotle argues that the higher form of intelligence is theoretical—the sort of intelligence that mathematics, physics, or philosophy exercise. In the *Metaphysics* (I, 981a–b), moreover, Aristotle ranks the sciences higher in intelligence than embodied activities and crafts, for only the former enable knowledge of the principles and causes. In this tradition, the concept of intelligence is *elitist* in that it is used preferentially, if not exclusively, for intellectual activities.

In opposition to this tradition, Ryle (1949, pp. 25–27) argued that intelligence epithets are egalitarian in that they are equally applied across skillful activities and their practitioners, whether these activities are practical and embodied (such as sports and crafts) or theoretical and intellectual (such as sciences or playing chess). According to Ryle's (1949, pp. 26, 48) anti-elitist view, 'intelligent' cannot be defined solely in terms of 'intellectual'—nor is intelligent behavior merely a matter of theorizing; rather, 'intelligent' appropriately describes *all* skillful performers—"the boxer, the surgeon, the poet, and the salesman" alike—whether the relevant activities are intellectual, theoretical, or embodied.

As psychologists of intelligence such as Gardner (2011) and Sternberg (1985) have argued, the sort of elitism that Ryle opposed in the *Concept of Mind* is also implicit in the history of psychometrics. Abstract-analytical skills dominate IQ tests to the exclusion of more embodied skills, such as spatial, bodily kinesthetic, and practical skills (Block & Dworkin, 1974; Gardner, 2011; Sternberg, 2015, 2022). Curry (2021a) has recently suggested that current IQ tests track the Western folk concept of intelligence; to the extent the former are elitist, it is reasonable to expect the latter to be elitist too (for a review, see Pavese, 2026b, Chapter 3).

Against the Rylean claim that 'intelligent' corresponds to 'skillfulness', Hand (2007, p. 41) argues instead that the folk concept of intelligence is an aptitude for *theorizing*, by which he means not just producing, but also evaluating and applying theories, which are, according to him, a variety of "cognitive constructions by which human beings plan, govern, and justify their actions and organize, narrate, and explain their experiences." Using this broad sense of 'theoretical', Hand (2007) argues that 'intelligent activities' are 'theory-intensive activities'. On the assumption that the more intellectual, the more theory-intensive an activity is, and the more embodied an activity the less theory-intensive it is, Hand's (2007) view predicts—in line with elitism—that 'intelligent' should be used preferentially for activities the more intellectual and the less embodied they are.

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It remains an open question whether the ordinary concept of intelligence is egalitarian, as Ryle (1949) seems to have thought, or elitist, as the long tradition in philosophy and psychometrics assumes. Given the long philosophical discussion, yet the absence of empirical evidence to inform it, we investigate whether and in what ways the ordinary concept of intelligence applies differentially to intellectual versus embodied activities.

Following a standard taxonomy (Peacocke, 2021), we take embodied activities to be activities that constitutively require the use of limbs and muscles—paradigmatic examples being baseball, masonry, or running—whereas intellectual activities are those that do not constitutively require the use of limbs or muscles—such as scientific research, programming, or philosophizing and certain forms of artistic activities like poetry or musical composition. Embodied activities tend to be practical rather than theoretical in that they have practical goals (like producing or winning) rather than epistemic goals (like truth or knowledge). By contrast, intellectual activities can be both theoretical and practical. For example, certain activities like chess playing are practical in that they have practical goals (*i.e.*, checkmating the opponent) but also intellectual since they can be performed mentally (as in mental chess) and by disembodied artificial agents (such as Deep Blue). So, the use of limbs or muscles is not required for their performance (see Pavese, 2026a, pp. 90–94 for this taxonomy). Finally, we allow that some activities are more embodied than others to the extent to which their performance involves and is affected by the use of limbs and muscles—for example, most sports are typically more embodied than some crafts.

The Differential Use Hypothesis

It seems clear that people are willing to ascribe intelligence to practitioners of both intellectual and embodied activities. For example, a Google search for 'manual intelligence' returned 80 thousand entries (similarly for 'athletic intelligence'). Perhaps, people use other adjectives more often for sports and manual activity; a search for 'manual dexterity' returned 5.4 million entries and for 'manual skills' it returned about a million entries. But it seems false that people use 'intelligence' *only* to describe intellectual activities. Even 'genius' is often used to describe practitioners of embodied activities: for example, Athleta magazine labeled tennis player John McEnroe as 'the genius' (Pacione, n.d.).

In line with the philosophical tradition mentioned above, it also seems, however, that people might be *less* inclined to endorse conclusions about general intelligence from ascriptions of intelligence to practitioners of embodied rather than of intellectual activities. That is, they might be less inclined to endorse "*S* is intelligent (*tout court*)" from the premise "*S* is an intelligent *X*" if *X* is embodied rather than intellectual and less inclined to endorse such conclusions the more embodied the activity.

Work in linguistics and philosophy of language can help us understand these conflicting patterns of judgment. In these domains, researchers classify adjectives as *predicative* or *attributive* (Geach, 1956; MacKay, 1970; Rind & Tillinghast, 2008). An adjective *Y* is used *predicatively* when applied to a noun *X* whenever the sentence "*S* is a *Y X*" licenses the inference to "*S* is a *Y*." An adjective is used attributively in "*S* is a *Y X*" when such an inference is not licensed.

To understand this distinction, consider some standard cases. Some adjectives are always used attributively. For example, alienans adjectives such as 'putative' or 'fake' are *always* used attributively. For example, "Frank is a fake friend" does not entail that Frank is fake. Gradable adjectives such as 'small' and 'big' also tend to be used attributively. For example, from "Ellen is a small elephant," one cannot conclude that Ellen is small. Other adjectives are typically used predicatively. For example, from "Chad is a French butler," one can conclude that Chad is French.

Relative to these standard cases, we claim that the adjective 'intelligent' is distinctive, as it is used differentially. According to our Differential Use Hypothesis, people tend to endorse predicative inferential patterns with 'intelligent' to a greater extent when the activity being described is intellectual. And people tend to show this inferential pattern to a lesser extent when the activity being described is embodied—that is, people use it more attributively. As such, we predicted that people would endorse inferences from "*S* is an intelligent *X*" to "*S* is intelligent" to a greater extent when *X* is intellectual than when it is embodied. This pattern would vindicate a sort of elitism in the ordinary concept of intelligence, since it would suggest that ordinarily, *S* being an intelligent *X* is taken to be less indicative of *S*'s being generally intelligent if *X* is embodied rather than intellectual.

Experiment 1

The aim of our first experiment was to test the Differential Use Hypothesis. In this experiment, we presented participants with short statements in which the adjective 'intelligent' describes a practitioner of an intellectual or embodied activity. In our control conditions, we replaced 'intelligent' with an adjective that is used non-predicatively, 'ideal', or an adjective that is used predicatively, 'Italian'. We then asked participants for their agreement with a statement in which the adjectives 'intelligent', 'ideal', or 'Italian' describe the agent who performed the activity. For example, we investigated whether people would be inclined to endorse statements like "Ron is intelligent" to a greater degree when they were told that Ron is an intelligent scientist than when they were told that Ron is an intelligent ballplayer. All registrations, data, code, and materials for this project are available on the OSF project page. The registration for this experiment, including a power analysis, is available here.

Methods

Participants We recruited United States nationals who were born in and resided in the United States, spoke English as their first language, and who had a ≥99% approval rating on *Pro-*

lific. Initially, there were 1203 participants who completed the experiment in our data set. After completing the experiment on Qualtrics, one potential participant returned the survey, and another timed out of the survey. Returning the survey or timing out implies revoked consent, so we removed these participants' data from the data set before analysis. Moreover, participants with ResponseId 'R_1QBYrW4yoyNJzrj' and 'R_7Rz8jdB2kwsJuhw' have matching Prolific IDs. We have no preregistered criteria for excluding them from the data set, and we have no way to determine whether different people took the survey, so we kept these responses in the data set. As such, 1201 participants (M_{age} = 43.61, SD = 13.11, $Range$ = 19–84, 49% female) participated in this experiment. After they completed the experiment on Qualtrics, we compensated participants $0.21.

Materials and Procedure Participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions in a 2 (Activity Type: embodied, intellectual) × 3 (Adjective Type: differential-use, predicative, non-predicative) between-participants design. We asked participants to read a single statement and respond to a single dependent measure. In all conditions, participants read, "Consider the following statement: 'Ron is an [adjective] [noun]'." On the same page, we asked them to respond to: "Given that the statement 'Ron is an [adjective] [noun]' is true, to what extent do you agree that the statement 'Ron is [adjective]' is also true." We varied Activity Type, the noun, by varying whether Ron was a ballplayer (embodied) or a scientist (intellectual). We varied Adjective Type by varying whether the adjective was 'Italian' (predicative), 'intelligent' (differential-use), or 'ideal' (non-predicative). In the differential-use, intellectual conditions, for example, participants read, "Consider the following statement: 'Ron is an intelligent scientist'." On the same page, we asked them to respond: "Given that the statement 'Ron is an intelligent scientist' is true, to what extent do you agree that the statement 'Ron is intelligent' is also true." Participants responded on a –3 to 3 scale (–3 = 'strongly disagree', 0 = 'neutral', 3 = 'strongly agree'). In all experiments, we asked participants to report their gender and age before reminding them of one of the authors' email addresses and the email address for the Lake Forest College HSRC, which approved this research.

Results

We conducted a 2 (Activity Type: embodied, intellectual) × 3 (Adjective Type: differential-use, predicative, non-predicative) between-participants ANOVA (Type III sums of squares) on participants' agreement with the inference. There were main effects of Adjective Type, $F(2, 1190) = 308.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.34$, 95% CI [.30, .38], and Activity Type, $F(1, 1190) = 64.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$, 95% CI [.03, .08]. There was an Adjective Type × Activity Type interaction, $F(2, 1190) = 5.63$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$, 95% CI [.00, .02] (Figure 1).

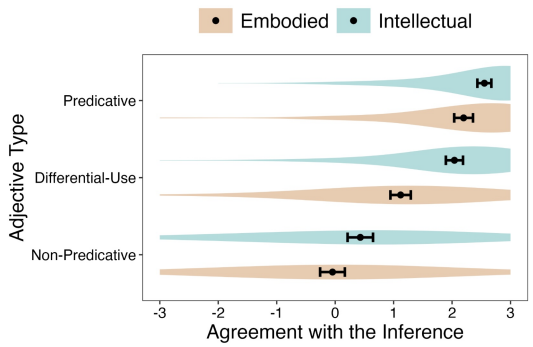

Figure 1: Mean agreement with the inference in Experiment 1 as a function of Adjective Type and Activity Type. Error bars indicate 95% CI. Violin plots show distribution of responses.

Our primary prediction was that in the differential-use condition, participants would agree more with the inference in the intellectual rather than the embodied condition. To test this, we ran a planned, uncorrected, one-sided simple-effects contrast. For the differential-use condition, participants in the intellectual condition agreed with the inference (M = 2.04, SD = 1.05, n = 200) more than participants in the embodied condition (M = 1.12, SD = 1.26, n = 201), $t(1190) = 7.35$, $p < .001$, $d = .73$, 95% CI [.54, .93].

Exploratory Analyses We also ran a preregistered exploratory analysis to investigate whether Activity Type affected agreement in the predicative and non-predicative conditions. To test this, we conducted a Tukey-corrected simple-effects contrast for the predicative and non-predicative conditions. For the predicative condition, participants in the intellectual condition agreed with the inference (M = 2.55, SD = .86, n = 199) more than participants in the embodied condition (M = 2.20, SD = 1.15, n = 198), $t(1190) = 2.83$, $p = .005$, d = .28, 95% CI [.08, .48]. For the non-predicative condition, participants in the intellectual condition agreed with the inference (M = 0.43, SD = 1.56, n = 200) more than participants in the embodied condition (M = –0.05, SD = 1.51, n = 198), $t(1190) = 3.78$, $p < .001$, $d = .38$, 95% CI [.18, .58].

We then ran an exploratory analysis that was not preregistered to determine whether the effect of Activity Type on agreement with the inference was larger in the differential-use condition relative to the predicative and non-predicative conditions. Using Holm-adjusted pairwise comparisons, we tested the simple effect contrasts for each adjective type. The effect of Activity Type on agreement with the inference was larger in the differential-use condition than in the predicative condition, $t(1190) = 3.18$, $p = .005$, $d = .45$, 95% CI [.17, .73], and the non-predicative condition, $t(1190) = 2.51$, p = .025, $d = .36$, 95% CI [.08, .63]. There was no evidence that the effect of Activity Type on agreement with the inference was larger in the predicative relative to the non-predicative conditions, $t(1190) = 0.67$, $p = .501$, $d = .10$, 95% CI [–.18, .37].

Discussion

Participants did not tend to use the adjective 'intelligent' predicatively, as they did not tend to agree with the inference across the two differential-use conditions to the same degree. They also did not tend to use the adjective 'intelligent' non-predicatively, as they did not tend to disagree with the inference across the two differential-use conditions. Rather, participants were more inclined to agree with the inference when 'intelligent' was used to describe an intellectual rather than an embodied activity. That is—in line with the Differential Use Hypothesis—people tended to use 'intelligent' predicatively with a paradigmatically intellectual activity more than with a paradigmatically embodied activity. Notably, we found that participants showed a similar pattern of agreement in the predicative and non-predicative conditions, but we found that the effect was larger in the differential-use condition. These results suggest that people use 'intelligent' differentially across intellectual and embodied activities.

In Experiment 1, we investigated these patterns for only one intellectual activity and one embodied activity, limiting our ability to generalize from these findings. In Experiment 2, we investigated whether this is a more general phenomenon.

Experiment 2

The aim of this experiment was to test the generality of the patterns of inference we found in Experiment 1. In this experiment, we attempted to replicate the inference patterns we observed in Experiment 1 across 50 different types of activities—25 paradigmatically embodied and 25 paradigmatically intellectual. The registration for this experiment, including a power analysis, is available here.

Methods

Participants We recruited participants on Prolific using the same recruitment criteria as in Experiment 1. We had one additional participant above our expected recruitment. We found that participants with ResponseId 'R_5LG7bDnV1zneu8x' and 'R_70epAOjeSVpJXTa' have matching Prolific IDs. We have no preregistered criteria for excluding them from the data set, and we have no way to determine whether different people took the survey, so we kept these responses in the data set. As such, 1251 participants (M_{age} = 41.90, SD = 12.65, $Range$ = 19–84, 49% female) participated in this experiment. After they completed the experiment on Qualtrics, we compensated participants $0.21.

Materials and Procedure Participants were randomly assigned to one of 50 conditions in a between-participants experiment with 2 Activity Types (embodied, intellectual) with 25 distinct activities nested in each Activity Type. As in Experiment 1, we asked participants to read a single statement and respond to a single dependent measure. In all conditions, participants read, "Consider the following statement: 'Ron is an intelligent [noun]'." On the same page, we asked them to respond to the following: "Given that the statement 'Ron is an intelligent [noun]' is true, to what extent do you agree that the statement 'Ron is intelligent' is also true." We varied the activity, the noun, by varying whether Ron was one of the 50 nouns. For example, he was a runner (embodied) or a mathematician (intellectual). Participants responded on the same scale as Experiment 1.

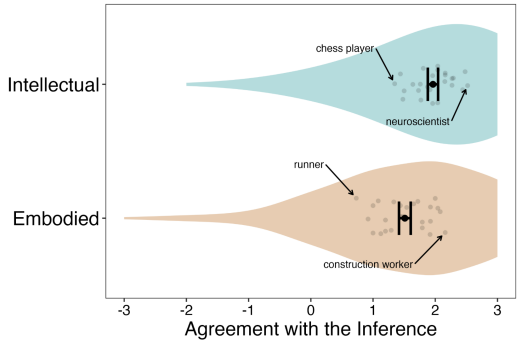

Figure 2: Mean agreement with the inference in Experiment 2 as a function of Activity Type. Error bars indicate 95% CI. Violin plots show distribution of responses. Gray points indicate mean agreement for each activity.

Results

Our primary prediction was that participants would agree more with the inference in the intellectual condition relative to the embodied condition. To test this, we fit a linear mixed-effects model predicting participant agreement from Activity Type with activity as a random intercept in the model (using Satterthwaite degrees of freedom). Overall, participants in the intellectual condition agreed with the inference (M = 1.96, SD = 1.05, n = 625) more than participants in the embodied condition (M = 1.51, SD = 1.19, n = 620), b = 0.45, SE = 0.11, $t(48.06) = 4.27$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.24, .66] (Figure 2).

Discussion

In accordance with the Differential Use Hypothesis, we found that, across a variety of activities, participants agreed with an inference from a statement about a practitioner of an intellectual activity being intelligent to a statement about the agent being intelligent to a larger extent than they agree with an inference from a statement about a practitioner of an embodied activity being intelligent to a statement about the agent being intelligent. These results replicate those of Experiment 1 across a range of activities.

While the effect generalizes across a range of activities, one might object that participants in our experiments could be assuming that there are more intelligent people who engage in certain activities or that intelligent people are drawn to certain activities. If this were true, the observed pattern of inference would not show anything about differential adjective use—it'd show only something about people's perceptions of particular

activities and their typical practitioners. We addressed this worry in Experiment 3.

Experiment 3

To address this worry in Experiment 3, we introduced a fictional activity—being a "glentor"—and we described it as either an intellectual or an embodied activity, and we used a similar design and measure as in Experiments 1 and 2. If we found the same pattern of results here, we could conclude that people's differential use of 'intelligent' for embodied and intellectual activities—and not their associations with particular activities—explained our previous findings. So, we attempted to replicate our findings from Experiments 1 and 2 using this novel, fictional activity. The registration for this experiment, including a power analysis, is available here.

Methods

Participants We recruited participants on Prolific using the same recruitment criteria as in Experiment 1. Initially, there were 1086 participants who completed the experiment in our data set. After completing the experiment on Qualtrics, one potential participant timed out of the survey. Timing out implies revoked consent, so we removed this participant's data from the data set before analysis. Moreover, participants with ResponseId 'R_5IgEX8zOBeyC3DV' and 'R_3coLo1kYJcrYlwM' have matching Prolific IDs. We have no preregistered criteria for excluding them from the data set, and we have no way to determine whether different people took the survey, so we kept these responses in the data set. As such, 1085 participants (M_{age} = 41.39, SD = 13.08, $Range$ = [19–78], 49% female) participated in this experiment. After they completed the experiment on Qualtrics, we compensated participants $0.30.

Materials and Procedure Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions in a between-participants experiment with one factor (Activity Type) and two levels (embodied, intellectual). In this experiment, we asked participants to read a short passage and then respond to a single dependent measure. In both conditions, participants read about a word, *glentor*, that we made up to describe a person who performs a fictional activity. We described the activity as intellectual or embodied. In all conditions, participants then read, "Consider now the following statement: 'Ron is an intelligent glentor.'" On the same page, we asked them to respond to the following: "Given that the statement 'Ron is an intelligent glentor' is true, to what extent do you agree that the statement 'Ron is intelligent' is also true." Participants responded on the same scale as Experiments 1 and 2.

Results

Participants in the intellectual condition agreed with the inference (M = 1.87, SD = 1.03, n = 541) more than participants in the embodied condition (M = 1.07, SD = 1.23, n = 540), $t(1044.33) = 11.45$, $p < .001$, $d = .70$, 95% CI [.57, .82] (Figure 3).

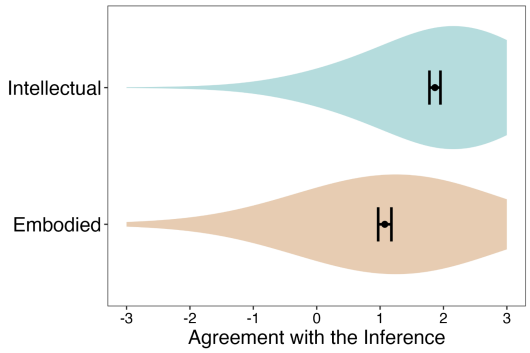

Figure 3: Mean agreement with the inference in Experiment 3 as a function of Activity Type. Error bars indicate 95% CI. Violin plots show distribution of responses.

Discussion

In Experiment 3, we again replicated the inference pattern predicted by the Differential Use Hypothesis.

General Discussion

Across three experiments, we found support for the Differential Use Hypothesis: people tend to use 'intelligent' differentially for intellectual and embodied activities in that they use it predicatively to a larger extent with the former kinds of activities than with the latter. Experiment 2 shows that this pattern holds across a range of activities. And Experiment 3 shows that this pattern does not arise simply because of people's associations with particular activities; rather, when it comes to intelligence, there seems to be a difference in how people think about embodied and intellectual activities.

Importantly, we did not find that people use 'intelligent' *entirely* non-predicatively for embodied activities, as people do not completely disagree with the inferences in the embodied condition. Rather, we find that people tend to use 'intelligent' predicatively to a larger extent for intellectual relative to embodied activities. This finding might seem surprising. Consider a statement that uses a non-predicative adjective like "Frank is a fake friend." It seems that people should disagree with an inference from this statement to "Frank is fake." Likewise—if people use 'intelligent' non-predicatively for embodied activities—we should see that pattern of inference for people's use of 'intelligent' in the embodied conditions, but we do not.

This finding, however, is consistent with our hypothesis. First, we did not find general disagreement with the inference for our non-predicative adjective—'ideal'—in Experiment 1 either, as participants' agreement was around the midpoint of the scale. So, more work should be done to explore people's use of these kinds of adjectives. Second, the Differential Use Hypothesis, as we stated it at the outset, was not that people should disagree with the inference in the embodied condition—only that participants should agree with the inference *to a larger extent* in the intellectual condition.

One remarkable implication of these findings is that they suggest that the distinction between predicative and attributive inferential patterns does not perfectly align with the distinction between intersective and subsective adjectives, as is commonly assumed in linguistics (Clark, 1970; Kamp & Partee, 1995). Intersective adjectives *A* (e.g., 'blue') intersect with the nouns *N* such that an *A N* is both an *A* and an *N* (e.g., a blue sweater is a sweater and is blue). Subsective adjectives (e.g., 'skillful'), instead, are not intersective since they are relative to the standards introduced by the noun. A skillful musician, for instance, is not both skillful and a musician—but only skillful *qua* musician. One cannot conclude from the facts that one is a skillful musician and that one is a gardener that one is a skillful gardener. Like 'skillful', the primary reading of 'intelligent' is subsective rather than intersective. As such, an intelligent scientist is not just a person who is intelligent and is a scientist; rather, it is a person who is intelligent *qua* scientist. Typically, subsective adjectives work fully attributively—'skillful' being a primary example in the linguistic literature—while intersective adjectives work fully predicatively. What is interesting in our findings is that while 'intelligent' privileges a subsective reading, its pattern of inference is not always attributive, and it behaves more predicatively than attributively with intellectual activities.

Our findings are also relevant for the question whether the ordinary concept of intelligence is elitist (Hand, 2007; Pavese, 2026a; Ryle, 1949). Consider the extreme elitist view that the ordinary concept of intelligence preferentially targets intellectual activities and their practitioners. As we noted at the outset, however, people seem to describe embodied activities and their practitioners as intelligent, and participants in our experiments tend to agree that intelligent practitioners of embodied activities are intelligent—although to a lesser degree than practitioners of intellectual activities. So, this extreme version of elitism is likely flawed.

However, weaker versions of elitism may be more in accordance with folk psychology. The fact that 'intelligent' tends to be used predicatively to a larger extent with intellectual than with embodied activities suggests that people are more willing to attribute general intelligence to individuals who are deemed intelligent practitioners of an intellectual activity than to individuals who are deemed intelligent practitioners of an embodied activity. Moreover, our evidence suggests that people are quite willing to accept ascriptions of intelligence *simpliciter* to individuals, especially (but not exclusively) for practitioners of intellectual activities. On the assumption that skillfulness can only be ascribed with reference to a particular activity, this evidence challenges Ryle's (1949) alignment of 'intelligent' with 'skillfulness'. Our evidence for the Differential Use Hypothesis is, thus, evidence for a weakly elitist ordinary concept of intelligence.

This work may also have some applications. In a series of influential studies (Bian, Leslie, & Cimpian, 2018; Bian, Leslie, Murphy, & Cimpian, 2018; Chestnut et al., 2018; Leslie et al., 2015), researchers found that the myth that raw talent is required for intelligence has discriminatory consequences for minorities. And the myth is particularly severe in certain domains such as philosophy, musical composition, mathematics, physics, and computer science (Leslie et al., 2015, pp. 263–264). In our work herein, we have categorized these as intellectual, rather than embodied, domains. People's differential use of intelligence epithets across intellectual and embodied domains might help explain why the myth affects these more theoretical and abstract domains over others: people are more inclined to attribute general intelligence and genius epithets in these domains, propagating the myth and its consequences.

We plan to investigate several further questions. First, we plan to investigate whether this phenomenon replicates across cultures and languages. As Curry (2021b) points out, the folk concept of intelligence is sensitive to cultural differences. The participants in our studies were United States nationals. Accordingly, we plan to extend our research to different populations to possibly capture such differences. Second, we plan to test the Rylean hypothesis that 'intelligent' is used in the same way as 'skillful' to further our understanding of the relation between the ordinary concept of intelligence and those of skills and of skillfulness. Third, we plan to investigate whether this phenomenon affects the perception of moral standing. Some evidence suggests that our attribution of intelligence to individuals—*e.g.*, nonhuman animals and artificial intelligence—affects our perception of their moral standing (Joo, 2024; Ladak et al., 2024; Piazza et al., 2014; Ruby & Heine, 2012; Sytsma & Machery, 2012). We plan to investigate in particular whether the nature of the activity that the artificial agents practice might affect people's perception of their moral standing. Finally, a growing literature suggests that the attributions of intelligence may impact affective polarization (Hartman et al., 2023; Knöchelmann & Cohrs, 2024; Oktar & Lombrozo, 2026; Stanley et al., 2020)—for example, thinking of others as less intelligent than oneself might affect whether one is willing to cooperate and find common ground. We plan to investigate whether the *Differential Use Hypothesis* can help us understand this phenomenon.

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