

THE CO-EVOLUTION OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Human intelligence has evolved hand in hand with social organization—from early survival and cooperation, through language, culture, and institutions, to the analytical age and today’s AI-mediated world. The emerging frontier is relational intelligence (RQ): the capacity for relating, trust, collaboration, and shared meaning.

ERA/PHASE	APPROX. TIME FRAME	KEY EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENTS IN INTELLIGENCE	PARALLEL SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS	DEFINING COGNITIVE & RELATIONAL CAPACITIES
1. Biological Intelligence	7-2 million years ago	Emergence of <i>Australopithecus</i> and early <i>Homo habilis</i> ; brain expansion begins; tool use and problem-solving	Small kin groups; basic cooperation for food and defense	Sensory awareness, pattern recognition, proto-empathy; survival through mutual protection
2. Social Intelligence	2 million-200,000 years ago	<i>Homo erectus</i> develops planning, imitation, teaching; control of fire	Cooperative hunting, food sharing, and division of labor	Early communication, learning by observation, coordination, shared attention
3. Symbolic/Linguistic Intelligence	200,000-40,000 years ago	<i>Homo sapiens</i> evolves language, imagination, symbolic reasoning	Formation of tribes; rituals, art, and oral traditions emerge	Abstract thought, moral judgment, storytelling, shared identity
4. Cultural Intelligence	40,000 years ago-10,000 BCE	Mastery of symbols, art, and tools; cumulative cultural learning	Large, stable communities; emergence of trade and social hierarchies	Collective memory; transmission of knowledge, cultural norms, and education
5. Civilizational Intelligence	10,000 BCE-1800 CE	Agriculture, writing, and mathematics; institutional learning	Rise of cities, empires, organized religion, and law	Bureaucratic reasoning, moral codes, large-scale cooperation, empathy beyond kin
6. Analytical Intelligence	1800-2000 CE	Scientific revolution, industrialization, formal education, and IQ testing	Nation-states, global communication, labor specialization	Abstract reasoning, innovation, data-driven problem-solving, systemic thinking
7. Artificial/Hybrid Intelligence	2000 CE-present	Digital and AI revolutions; externalization of memory and cognition	Networked societies, social media, virtual collaboration	Extended cognition, collective intelligence, information abundance but relational strain
8. Relational Intelligence (Emerging)	21st century onward	Integration of neuroscience, empathy research, and social cognition; recognition of RQ (relational intelligence)	Global interdependence; search for meaning and connection in an AI-mediated world	Empathy, trust, collaboration, cocreation, individual and collective well-being

SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN EVOLUTIONARY ANTHROPOLOGY, COGNITIVE SCIENCE, CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY, AND EDUCATION, INCLUDING WORK BY ANDY CLARK, MERLIN DONALD, ROBIN DUNBAR, HOWARD GARDNER, DANIEL GOLEMAN, JOSEPH HENRICH, SARAH BLAFFER HRDY, AND MICHAEL TOMASELLO.