

# THE DAILY COURIER

## IQ wrong thing to measure ourselves by

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A recent report from the conservative Heritage Foundation was panned from all sides including conservatives such as the libertarian Cato Institute and even a previous Heritage author. You can read about that yourself. My comment is on the IQ issue. The report urged not allowing less educated immigrants to enter, which echoed the co-author's thesis from just a few years earlier that Hispanics have lower IQs, and suggesting that be a factor in immigration policy. That author has since resigned from Heritage.

In a small way the theme here is similar to last week's column, but then I don't schedule what's news, I just expand on it.

There are two mistakes made about IQ. One is, like the Heritage author, to think we should discriminate based on it.

The other is what is often the opposite reaction, which is to pretend the question doesn't exist. I have seen IQ statistics that show a slight difference in averages among groups. It's taken to be almost sacred that that can't be true, or must never be acknowledged. I think that misunderstands what is sacred.

Let me come at this from a more socially acceptable angle. I'm Caucasian. I have seen averages showing Asians scoring a tad above Caucasians. There. It's stated. It's in the numbers, and others have noted it, and I've just accepted it flatly here. There are differences. That misses the point, though. Let me touch on some secondary points before coming to the main point.

1. IQ is a poor measurement in numerous ways. For instance, individuals get different scores at different times, and it's impossible to make an IQ test that has no cultural bias.
2. It doesn't account for other kinds of intelligence like social intelligence - intelligence about people - which may be just as important, maybe even more important.
3. Regardless of averages, there are many, many individual Caucasians who have higher IQs than many individual Asians, and the same for any other two groups.
4. If one person scores better on the math portion and someone else on the language portion, how do you score those? Evenly? Is one skill more important than the other? It's a somewhat subjective matter decided by the designers of the tests.
5. There are a half-dozen other issues about environmental factors and group averages and the meaninglessness of grouping humans, but it's all beside the point.

The main point gets back to that understanding of what's sacred, or, to be less

sanctimonious about it, what values we hold important, and need to keep as important to live in a good and civilized and just society.

The main point? So what! You're from Mexico or points farther south? You want to come here legally and work and be part of our country? Welcome to America, fellow human being! And no, I don't want to check your IQ score before welcoming you. It might be higher than mine, or your social or emotional IQ might be higher than mine.

We do have immigration policies that favor certain advanced degrees and skills we want more of. That's not what this is about. This is about categorizing an entire chunk of humanity.

Just to play the contrarian for a minute, if we were going to discriminate against who we let into the country, or who we allow to set policy, IQ would not be my first criteria. Maybe we should test for compassion or emotional or social intelligence. Humans vary. Women probably score better on social intelligence. So should we only allow women to make social policy? Hispanics traditionally have a particularly strong family-centric culture. So should we only allow Hispanics to set family policy? The Heritage author probably has a high IQ but is evidently low on just plain good sense. Maybe we should test for the ability to translate whatever one's IQ is into clear thinking, or for a sound grasp on the values of a just and civilized society.

If the core point of America was to be the smartest or the most powerful or the richest, and if the Heritage author's measurements of groups were meaningful, then he'd be right. Except he should then take it a step further and propose we start allowing only Asians to immigrate.

But that's not the main point of America and of the accumulated wisdom we humans have tried to apply to ourselves since the Enlightenment. We all are flawed individuals who are above average in some ways and below in others. I don't know whether there really is any difference between groups or whether IQ is even testing things of the most importance, and it doesn't matter. The point is that, from the brightest to the most ordinary, we all are "created equal." Many things flow from that basis, including realizing more of our national aptitude, our power, or resilience, our wealth, and the benefits of living in a land of rights and freedom. We can maintain all of that by consistently pointing out when fools would have us go astray.