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Security Politics of the Intelligence Quotient (IQ)

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Abstract. This article describes conceptual weaknesses of the intelligence quotient (IQ) and their security implications.

There are a number of conceptual weaknesses of IQ--each with security implications. (1) IQ suggests there is something psychologically adaptive, some immutable potential, something beyond experience that can only be tapped or developed to varying degrees. This "something" is often semantically used and abused interchangeably with measurements of aptitude and achievement. In fact, the three are measured similarly--with stimuli with which the individual being assessed has had some degree of experience. The assumption that there is something beyond experience allows social authorities to reach a conclusion that there are some individuals and populations beyond the benefits of experience. This conclusion justifies differences in social opportunities among individuals and populations. (2) IQ denotes a quantitative distribution of the something that is posited to exist in (1) above. The quantitative distribution is suggestive of some objective reality that is measured scientifically. In fact, the nature of so-called IQ tests can be a priori crafted by a test developer to yield various distributions depending on the needs of the developer, consumers of the test, and various social authorities--all having vested interests in the creation, maintenance, or attenuation of various social disparities. (3) IQ has been positively correlated with successful financial and other social outcomes. Yet the statistical variance of differences among individuals and populations in these outcomes that is accounted for by IQ is at most a modest minority of total variance. Thus, other factors account for most of the outcomes. Moreover, as task components and psychological substrates correlated with income change in an evolutionary fashion with the interactions of science, technology, society, and culture, relevant IQ total and subscale variance will change as well. Yet, socio-educational policy continues to be based significantly on IQ. A strong case can be made that IQ attenuates pressures on social authorities to confront and modify the other factors that may be more threatening to the very social order and the current distribution of haves to have nots. (4) Even if IQ does present some contemporary and immutable adaptive potential--a potential impervious to experience and self-change mechanisms--theories of evolutionary psychology suggest that this adaptiveness should be largely related to an environment significantly in the past. And the conditions of today should be nurturing an IQ of tomorrow that would have been largely adaptive today. Moreover, the something measured by IQ may not have been, be, or will be adaptive at all. Maintaining what may be a fiction concerning IQ again plays to the social concerns of who will be the haves and have nots. (5) If instead one insists that IQ is mutable, it loses any claim to be different from aptitude and achievement, and the whole IQ enterprise is exposed as nothing but a social mythology girding political power.

While issues of intentionality, causality, and epiphenomenality need to be further explored, one doesn't need a high IQ to conclude that it may represent one of the most subjugating of discourses. (See Brody, N. (1996). Intelligence and public policy. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 2, 473-485; Gottfredson, L.S. (1997). Mainstream science on intelligence: An editorial with 42 signatories, history, and bibliography. *Intelligence*, 24, 13-23; Kirby, J.R. (1995). Intelligence and social policy. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 41, 322-334; Krull, C.D., & Pierce, W.D. (1995). *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 41, 349-354; Laosa, L.M. (1996). Intelligence testing and social policy. *Journal of Applied*

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