



The Measure of Merit: Talents, Intelligence, and Inequality in the French and American Republics, 1750-1940 by John Carson

Review by: Patrick J. Ryan

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honor. Documenting and recognizing these “forgotten allies” is one of the most important elements of Glatthaar and Martin’s work.

Gerald F. Reid
Sacred Heart University
Fairfield, Connecticut

George Mason: Forgotten Founder. By Jeff Broadwater. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. xiv, 329 pp. \$34.95, ISBN 978-0-8078-3053-6.)

Jeff Broadwater offers an insightful and elegantly written biography restoring George Mason, often dismissed as being an Anti-federalist obstructionist, to the pantheon of revolutionary-era leaders. He structures his analysis around several broad themes: Mason’s role as a member of the landed gentry, his adherence to the principles of republicanism, his commitment to the interests of Virginia, and his changing relationships with his peers.

Mason was a successful planter. He increased his property holdings to provide for his children, lived within his means, and cultivated grain as tobacco became less profitable. As his often-quoted statements at the Philadelphia convention attest, he abhorred the institution of slavery but nonetheless relied on slave labor. Like other Virginians, he speculated in western lands. He was not, however, especially vexed by the Proclamation of 1763 and continued to devise ways to protect his investments well into the 1780s.

He overcame his early reputation as an inattentive public servant. Often plagued with gout, attached to Gunston Hall, and lacking the spur of ambition, Mason was a lackluster officeholder well into his mid-twenties. The resistance of the 1760s changed that. Writing the *Fairfax Resolves* (1774), participating in the nonimportation movement, and organizing the militia enhanced his reputation and established an alliance with George Washington. His later work, as the author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the state constitution, brought him into contact with Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

The three chapters on the formation and ratification of the Constitution are the central part of this interpretation. Surprisingly, Ma-

son emerges as an early and vocal nationalist at the Philadelphia convention, accepting the need for both a more energetic national government and the subordination of the states to the union, while strongly influenced by a commitment to the principles of republicanism and the protection of the agricultural interests of Virginia. By the end of the convention, however, he became disenchanted with the Constitution. His major reservation was not the omission of a bill of rights, but rather the convention’s rejection of a supermajority requirement for passage of navigation acts by Congress, thus subordinating Virginia’s interests to those of New England. An overemphasis on Mason’s *Objections* (1787) misrepresents the range of opinions he expressed during the ratification debate.

Mason’s relationships with Virginia’s leaders underwent subtle changes over his lifetime. His alliance with Washington disintegrated over political differences in the 1780s and questions of personal integrity. He formed a close association with Richard Henry Lee during the ratification controversy, while James Monroe became his protégé. Even after the formation of the new government, Jefferson and Madison maintained cordial relations and expressed respect for him. His untimely death in 1792 precluded his participation in the debate over the Alien and Sedition Acts, where he might have offered additional constitutional commentary.

Whitman Hawley Ridgway
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

The Measure of Merit: Talents, Intelligence, and Inequality in the French and American Republics, 1750–1940. By John Carson. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. xx, 401 pp. \$39.50, ISBN 978-0-691-01715-0.)

The Measure of Merit is a detailed comparative history of ideas about individual ability among French and American intellectual elites. It offers nearly thirteen hundred substantive endnotes spanning three centuries and two languages in the published works and archived papers of prominent writers who grappled with the capacity of the individual under lib-

eralism. This book must be read by anyone interested in the historical construction of the idea of individual intelligence and should become a standard in the history of psychology. Although the comparative analysis of French and American political cultures is not always persuasive, the book offers analysis important for those studying a range of topics, including educational theory, standardized testing, disability, eugenics, and racial science.

Measure of Merit contains two primary themes. The first is the history of the idea of mental ability as a way to understand and measure personal merit, while justifying inequity between groups and maintaining hierarchies within institutions. Within that story, John Carson focuses on documenting and explaining a significant tension between two understandings of individual intelligence. Intelligence has been viewed as a unitary, unchanging, hierarchically arranged entity of the brain measurable by a test and represented in a single index. That belief is captured best by the development of intelligence quotient (IQ) testing. But it also has been constructed as a multivalent, complex set of features requiring prolonged study and a clinical explication for each individual case. The contrast between those two views of intelligence provides the grounding for the book's second theme; Carson argues that American political culture was more amenable to the unitary view of intelligence, while the French were willing to forgo the allure of IQ and entertain the more nuanced discourse suggested by the latter. The irony, in Carson's view, is that the Americans were more susceptible to a rigid and hierarchical understanding of intelligence because their means for maintaining elite leadership in their educational and military institutions were less developed and less secure than those in France.

The theses of *Measure of Merit* are carefully established in a series of clear arguments, but questions might be asked of each. One general question is whether the distinction between conceiving of intelligence as unitary or multivalent is as significant as Carson argues, or whether the construction of intelligence as an individual attribute might be more significant. Carson gives us a detailed story of Robert Yerkes's successful insertion of intelligence testing into the apparatus of American military se-

lection during World War I and contrasts it to the lack of similar reforms in France. For Carson, this is a story of "accommodation and resistance," where American psychologists "strove mightily to fit themselves and their knowledge into the structure of army life" (pp. 217, 225). Army life is pictured as following elitist and intimate forms of traditional authority. But, is the testing of American troops in World War I surprising? The modern militaries of the early twentieth century in both nations were disciplinary institutions fashioned according to bureaucratic individualism that could easily accept IQ testing but did not require it. Their systems of ranking, uniformity, and order are all commensurate with IQ testing, as well as more multivalent analysis of the human subject. That would fit with the fact that standardized testing and clinical analysis have common intellectual roots. Stressing continuity would also explain why, in both France and the United States, standardized assessment and clinical analysis have flourished in armies, schools, hospitals, asylums, and prisons: those disciplinary institutions position the individual as a subject reflecting on the self as object. By seeing continuity where Carson sees difference, intelligence—whether multivalent or unitary, based on nature or nurture, measured by one test or made visible by sustained observation—might emerge differently as one way among many for disciplinary institutions to reproduce the tension between subjectivity and objectification of the subject. And, perhaps, the contrast between the two republics would emerge as less significant.

Patrick J. Ryan
King's University College
University of Western Ontario
London, Canada

Cradle of Liberty: Race, the Child, and National Belonging from Thomas Jefferson to W. E. B. Du Bois. By Caroline F. Levander. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. xii, 247 pp. Cloth, \$74.95, ISBN 978-0-8223-3856-7. Paper, \$21.95, ISBN 978-0-8223-3872-7.)

Caroline F. Levander has written a far-ranging study of the cultural work performed by the conceptual category of the child in the