

SHORT PAPER #2
Mismeasure of Man
SOCIOLOGY 350

“Science is rooted in creative interpretation ... Theories are built upon the interpretation of numbers, and interpreters are often trapped by their own rhetoric. They believe in their own objectivity, and fail to discern the prejudice that leads them to one interpretation among many consistent with the numbers.”

Steven Jay Gould

Directions:

Part I

- a) After Morton, Paul Broca (see Chapter 2) emerged as the great “scientific defender” of the thesis that larger skull groups of humans were smarter than smaller skull people. Discuss how Broca was able to “explain away” the troublesome anomalies of: 1) big-brained Germans, 2) small-brained men of eminence, and c) large-brained criminals. Address each of these cases separately.
- b) In that fundamental way does the addition of Broca’s new “control variables” force us to question the validity of Morton’s contention that some races of mankind are smarter than others? In other words, how is that the control variables serve to solve the problem of bigger German versus French brains yet simultaneously undermine Morton’s claim that he had proven Caucasians to be smarter than other races?

Part II

- a) Discuss why it was necessary for the US Army to use two different forms of the IQ test---the Alpha and the Beta. In calculating the ethnic and racial group means on intelligence, the researchers combined both the alpha and the beta test results. Why was this problematic from a scientific standpoint?
- b) In his discussion conceptualization and measurement (Chapter 5), Babbie discusses **validity** --- “the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the true meaning of the concept under consideration.” Carefully examine the beta test (pp. 238-239) in the *Mismeasure of Man* and evaluate how well this measurement scale can be said to demonstrate: 1) face validity, 2) criterion-related validity, and content validity.

Part III

In Gould’s “Critique of *The Bell Curve*,” (pages 367-376), he concludes that Herrnstein and Murray have committed major errors of two types: a) omissions and confusions and b) content. Specifically, what exactly does Gould reveal the nature of these errors to be?

Your essays should be between two and three double-spaced typewritten pages in length. As stated in the syllabus, the papers are due in class one week from today.