

Background topics behind the discussion of high-stakes testing:

1. Cultural capital
2. Stephen Jay Gould on IQ.
3. Intelligence as a quality, not a quantity.
4. The bell curve and a “normal distribution”.
5. Is there a unitary thing in the head called “intelligence”?
5. IQ: correlation v causality
 - a. Positive and negative correlations

The fundamental, underlying question: What does it mean to be “well prepared”?

Cultural Capital

Definition:

Children are not simply socialized into the "values of society as a whole." Rather, they are socialized into the culture that corresponds to their class and, in Bourdieu's terms, this set of cultural experiences, values, beliefs and so forth represents a form of "cultural capital."

That is, cultural capital is a set of values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, experiences and so forth that equip people for their life in society. These values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, and experiences translate into social resources, or, lack thereof.

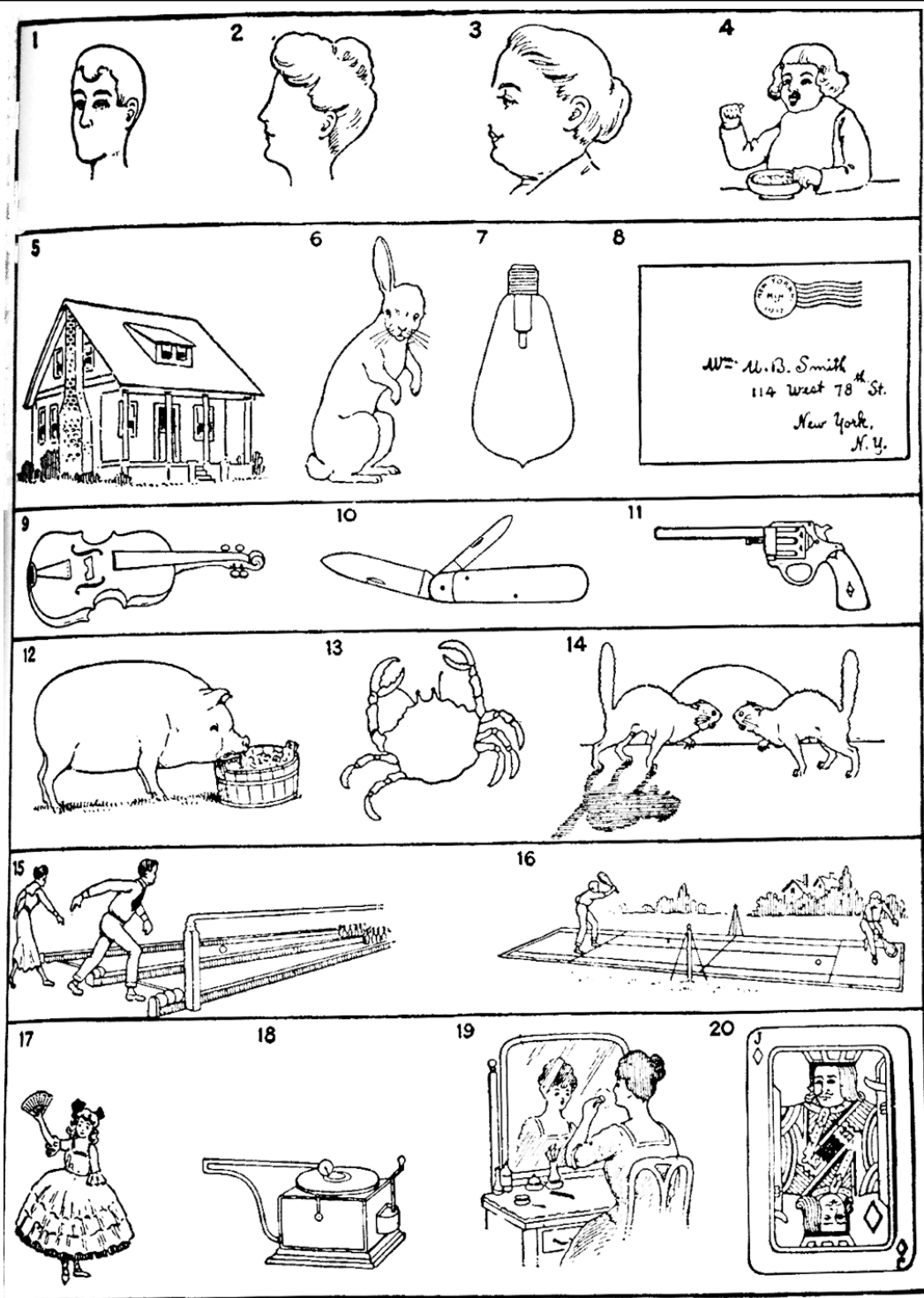
Education is a fundamentally moral
enterprise.

Education is about relationships between people,
hence moral in the most basic sense.

How do we treat each other in school?

Is there a unitary thing in the head called “intelligence”?

Intelligence testing as used in most of our schools indicates that this is our basic belief. It is the one belief on the part of teachers most feared by Alfred Binet (1857-1911).



Example from Army Beta test, 1918

IQ tests and the social agenda of their advocates roused critics right from the start. To the journalist Walter Lippmann, the intelligence-testers were "the Psychological Battalion of Death," seizing unparalleled power over every child's future. Lippmann and Terman dueled in the pages of the *New Republic* in 1922 and 1923. "I hate the impudence of a claim that in 50 minutes you can judge and classify a human being's predestined fitness in life," Lippmann wrote. "I hate the sense of superiority which it creates, and the sense of inferiority which it imposes." [...] Though he could never match Lippmann's eloquence, in the end Terman won the war: intelligence testing continued to spread. By the 1930s, kids with high IQs were being sent into more challenging classes to prepare for high-earning jobs or college, while low scorers got less demanding coursework, reduced expectations and dimmer job prospects.

Mitchell Leslie, in the *Stanford Magazine*, July/August, 2000

It was not until I was long out of school and indeed after the (first) World War that there came the hurried use of the new technique of psychological [IQ] tests, which were quickly adjusted so as to put black folk absolutely beyond the possibility of civilization.

-- W. E. B. Du Bois, 1940. As quoted in Robert V. Guthrie, *Even the Rat Was White: A Historical View of Psychology* (2nd edition) (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1998), p. 55.

Ask yourself: “What is the intent of this test?” Is it

- a test for achievement?
- a test for ability?

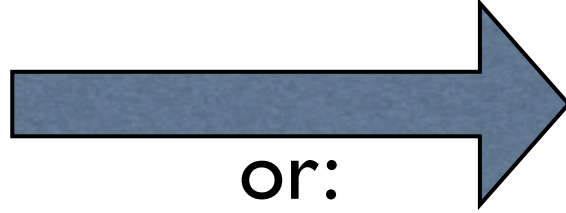
What’s the difference?

IQ (intelligence quotient)

**The importance of understanding the difference between
“correlation” and “causality”.**

Positive v. Negative Correlations

Positive Correlation:



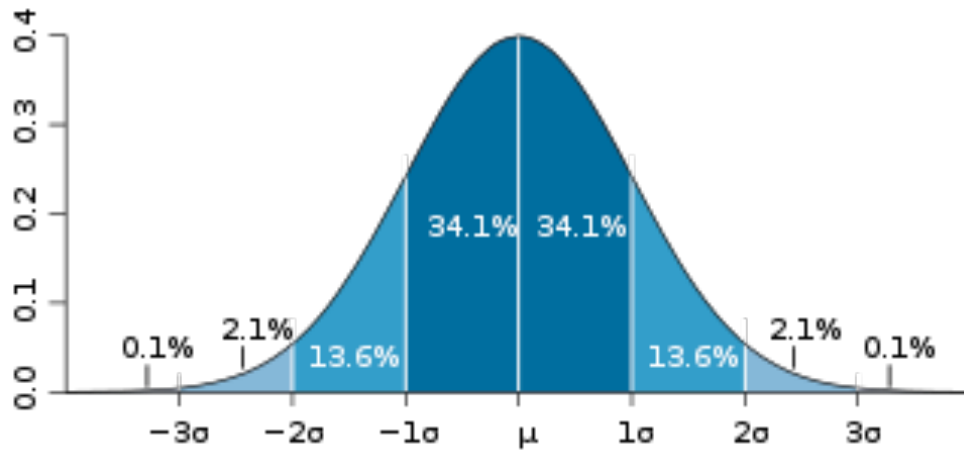
or:



Negative Correlation:



The Normal Distribution Curve



Dark blue is less than one [standard deviation](#) from the [mean](#). For the normal distribution, this accounts for about 68% of the set (dark blue), while two standard deviations from the mean (medium and dark blue) account for about 95%, and three standard deviations (light, medium, and dark blue) account for about 99.7%.

Image Source: Wikipedia

On the Dangers of “reification”:

Factor analysis, despite its status as pure deductive mathematics, was invented in a social context, and for definite reasons. And, though its mathematical basis is unassailable, its persistent use as a device for learning about the physical structure of intellect has been mired in deep conceptual errors from the start. The principal error... [is] reification—in this case, the notion that such a nebulous, socially defined concept as intelligence might be identified as a “thing” with a locus in the brain and a definite degree of heritability—and that it might be measured as a single number, thus permitting a unilinear ranking of people according to the amount of it they possess.

Stephen Jay Gould, in *The Mismeasure of Man*

“This year’s budget includes some funding for planning efforts associated with possibly providing compensation to persons sterilized by the state’s Eugenics Sterilization Program (HB 20). In North Carolina, more than 7,600 people were sterilized between 1929 and 1978 by the state’s Eugenics Sterilization Program. Some of the victims of the program were disabled or mentally disabled, but others were victimized simply because they were poor or black.”

Source, *The Raleigh Report* of August 31, 2009, from the office of Representative Cullie Tarleton, North Carolina House of Representatives, House District 93, Ashe and Watauga Counties.

NC Legislature

“Against Their Will: North Carolina’s Sterilization Program,” Winston-Salem Journal

(+interactive timeline 1948, Gamble)

Against Their Will: Nial's Story



Nial Cox Ramirez remembers every detail of what happened to her in 1965, even though she has been trying hard to forget.

Her options? Sign a form from the Eugenics Board of North Carolina "consenting" to be sterilized, or have welfare payments for her mother and six brothers and sisters cut off.

Ramirez, now 56, lives outside Atlanta. She is still trying to make sense of what happened.

[Click here for Nial's Story](#)

Nial's Story

What a man is depends on his character; but what he does, and what we think of what he does, depends on his circumstances. The characteristics that ruin a man in one class made him eminent in another.

Introductory Essay, *Major Barbara*
George Bernard Shaw