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Measurement in the Social Sciences (Observations)

Hubert M. Blalock

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Hubert M. Blalock : Measurement in the Social Sciences (Observations) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Measurement in the Social Sciences (Observations):

Among the frustrations constantly confronting the social scientist are those associated with the general process of measurement. The importance of good measurement has long been recognized in principle, but it has often been neglected in practice in many of the social sciences. Now that the methodological tools of multivariate analysis,

simultaneous-equation estimation, and causal modeling are diffused more widely into the social sciences, and now that the very serious implications of random and non-random measurement errors are being systematically investigated, it is all the more important that social scientists give top priority to the quality of their data and the clarity of their theoretical conceptualizations. The book is organized so that, one proceeds from problems of data collection to those of data analysis. It is not intended to be a complete work covering all types of measurement problems that have arisen in the social sciences. Instead, it represents a series of studies that are deemed to be crucial for the advancement of social science research but which have not received sufficient attention in most of the social sciences. The basic purpose is to stimulate further methodological research on measurement and to study the ways in which knowledge that has been accumulated in some fields may be generalized. Part I is concerned with applying scaling approaches developed in psychometrics to problems that arise in other social sciences. The focus is on finding better ways to ask questions of respondents so as to raise the level of measurement above that of simple ordinal scales. Part II focuses on multiple-indicator theory and strategies as applied to relatively complex models and to change data. In this section the emphasis shifts to how one analyzes fallible data through the construction of explicit measurement-error models. Part III deals with the statistical analysis of ordinal data, including the interpretation and empirical behaviors of various ordinal measures of association.

These papers are valuable testaments of the possibilities for social science measurement. Duane F. Alwin, *Contemporary Sociology* The Hamblin and Shinn papers provide a useful summary of what will undoubtedly become an important method for scaling various social stimuli. Kenneth C. Land, *American Journal of Sociology* The book is strongly reminiscent of Blalock's earlier book of readings in causal modeling, and it could be viewed as a useful and valuable addendum to it. Tony Coxon, *British Journal of Sociology* Social scientists engaged on quantitative research will find much of interest in this book and statisticians may find that it opens a window onto a world full of challenging problems. D.J. Bartholomew, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* About the Author H. M. Blalock, Jr. (1926-1991) was a professor in the department of sociology, University of Washington, Seattle. He was recipient of the 1973 ASA Samuel Stouffer Prize, a fellow of the American Statistical Association and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a member of the National Academy of Sciences. He was the seventieth president of the American Sociological Association.