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## ARTICLE

**Antecedents of Dispositions Testing: Lessons from the History of the Good Teacher**

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**The Social Justice Teacher**

In 2002 the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) published new standards for its 632 member schools of education. The first standard included a requirement that schools of education assess pre-service teachers' "dispositions," and suggested the core values of a good teacher; among them was a belief in "social justice." Indeed, until NCATE quietly dropped "social justice" from its materials last summer, it was given top billing along with such unassailable qualities as caring, fairness, honesty, and responsibility.<sup>[1]</sup>

The devil here is, of course, in the details. One person's notion of social justice is another's despotism, and as various high-profile clashes over the last few years suggested, the "social justice" that seems to prevail in schools of education is one that leans hard to the left.<sup>[2]</sup> Whether or not we embrace "social justice" for ourselves it is important to consider the ways that dictating a teacher's "dispositions" might mask a political or ideological litmus test. Indeed, while a handful of politically and religiously conservative students have been dismissed from schools of education using a social-justice standard, conspicuously, there have been no reports of pre-service teachers dismissed from any NCATE member institution for extreme left ideals.<sup>[3]</sup>

As this essay will demonstrate, I believe that the recent controversy over assessing a pre-service teacher's disposition has exacerbated a century-long divide over the purposes of education and the role of the teacher. On one side of this chasm stand those who believe that a teacher should be an expert in children and that teaching should be a child-centered enterprise organized around the whole child. These people might rally around a slogan like "No Contest," the title of Alfie Kohn's book in which he decries all forms of competition as harmful to children, and advocates educating the whole child.<sup>[4]</sup> On the other side of the chasm stand those who hold fast to the belief that a teacher must be, foremost, a master of content, and that teaching is primarily about transmitting knowledge. This group would likely agree with the dictum "No Excuses," the title of Abigail and Stephen Thernstroms' book in which they insist that the best levers for educational improvement are standards-based testing and the competition offered by charter schools.<sup>[5]</sup> Many, of course, attempt to situate themselves in the gulf between the extremes – nevertheless, these opposing viewpoints have, for the last century, played a formidable role in framing the central debates in education.

Two caveats and clarifications are required in preface to this essay. First, this is not a comprehensive history of either teacher testing or teacher accreditation.<sup>[6]</sup> Rather, to make sense of the "the social justice teacher," I provide a brief overview of the history of the No-Contest-No-Excuses chasm in education. I then explicate three previous efforts to define the good teacher or, conversely, the bad teacher. By taking a long view of the controversy at hand, I endeavor to show how efforts to dictate a teacher's attitudes, beliefs, orientations, viewpoint, personality, and most recently, her dispositions have all masked efforts *from within schools of education* to impose the No-Contest philosophy of education on pre-service teachers. While reformers oriented toward the No Excuses philosophy of education have certainly wielded influence on the teaching profession, they have largely operated from outside the walls of schools of education – for example, from foundations, think tanks, non-profit organizations, and even schools and academic departments other than education.<sup>[7]</sup>

Second, while there are certainly examples in the history of twentieth-century education of overt efforts to politicize teacher education, I present here three lesser-known efforts to define the good teacher. I have selected them because they employ a rhetoric that is strikingly similar to recent efforts to dictate a teacher's dispositions. Moreover, as I hope to make clear, these examples demonstrate how efforts to define the good teacher and the No-Contest philosophy of education have become increasingly aligned with a liberal political perspective, so that in the most recent controversy, dispositions became a Trojan horse for a left-leaning ideology.

### **A Brief Historiography of the No-Contest-No-Excuses Divide**

This historical investigation of recent efforts to produce a social justice teacher requires that we first understand the genesis of the No-Contest-No-Excuses divide. In particular, we must consider how the No-Contest philosophy of education took root in America's schools of education. To this end, we can revisit what historians of education have written about schooling in the Progressive Era, the crucible of both the public school system and the nation's schools of education.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, America's large public school systems were shaped by the demands of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration. Also at this time teacher training was shifting from normal schools to schools of education, some of which were housed in the new American university where scientism was on the rise.<sup>[8]</sup> During this period, teachers' work and their licensing became increasingly regulated, and the educational expert became increasingly vociferous and powerful in defining the good teacher.

In her *Left Back*, historian Diane Ravitch argues that during the Progressive Era there was a fork in the road in the history of American education; while one path led triumphantly to an academic curriculum and high standards for all children, the path schools took led into the brambles of a differentiated curriculum, vocational education, and such dubious inventions as the life-adjustment curriculum. The result, Ravitch bemoans, was that the schools taught anything but content. Ravitch rightly points to the anti-intellectual legacy that dogs America's schools (to which I will return in my conclusion), but the fork in the road she describes is too tidy.<sup>[9]</sup> Indeed, one of the most incisive criticisms of Ravitch's work is that it is presentist, and that the No-Contest-No-Excuses debate seems to have framed her analyses.<sup>[10]</sup>

If we turn to the work of historian Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, the fork in the road becomes a more complicated intersection. As Lagemann explains, the potential paths for American education were also influenced by an epistemological battle, which she presents as a bout between two giants of early twentieth-century educational research, John Dewey and E.L. Thorndike. As Lagemann sees it, psychologist E.L. Thorndike bested John Dewey, the father of child-centered pedagogy, and led educators down a path toward empiricism, measurement theory, and testing.<sup>[11]</sup> In other words, the result was that *neither* No Contest *nor* No Excuses emerged as the educational philosophy that would dominate the public schools in the crucible of the Progressive Era. Rather, if there were early front runners, they were a group historian David Tyack has dubbed the administrative progressives, who wielded the modern tools of social efficiency to rationalize the nation's burgeoning schools.<sup>[12]</sup>

However, the catch is that, despite the preeminence of the administrative progressives in the nation's schools, the No-Contest philosophy of education dominated the nation's schools of education, particularly in teacher education programs. As historian David Labaree wisely asserts, "the ed school's romance with progressivism" has become canonical so that it is heterodox to challenge the rhetoric of progressivism in teacher education programs.<sup>[13]</sup>

If the fork in the road in American educational history was actually a complex intersection, why, then, have the positions epitomized by No Contest and No Excuses calcified into a seemingly intractable opposition? And, why did recent efforts to define the good teacher as the social justice teacher inflame this long-standing rivalry? To answer this question, we can follow Lagemann's lead and investigate what she calls "the politics of knowledge" in schools of education, paying particularly attention to how research has been used to legitimate visions of the good teacher.<sup>[14]</sup> In addition, we can follow Labaree's example and excavate these politics by examining the rhetoric educational experts' used as they sought to remake the good teacher.<sup>[15]</sup>

Following both Lagemann's and Labaree's examples, then, I will turn here to three illustrative episodes from the history of teacher education, paying particular attention to the way education school insiders have cloaked their peculiar definition of the good teacher in both research and rhetoric. In this way I intend to show how efforts to define the good teacher have become increasingly conflated with reformers' political biases so that the recent attempt to test for the social justice teacher does, indeed, look dangerously like a litmus test for a correct political ideology.

### **The Hygienic Teacher**

The first illustrative iteration of the good teacher that we can investigate for antecedents to the social justice teacher and dispositions testing is the hygienic teacher. The hygienic teacher was legitimated by the science of mental hygiene and was spread to pre-service teachers through textbooks. Indeed, mental hygienists explicitly set out to exploit the nation's growing schools as a vehicle for spreading their worldview, which they insisted had the power to control the rapid social change brought about by America's modernization.<sup>[16]</sup>

Clifford Beers' autobiography, *A Mind that Found Itself*, galvanized the mental hygiene movement. In it Beers described his own mental breakdown while a student at Yale, his suicide attempt, and the inhumane treatment he received while he was institutionalized. Beers intended his story to create a patient-advocacy movement that would improve America's mental health system. Just as there was a National Society for the Prevention and Cure of Tuberculosis, Beers reasoned, so too should there be one to promote mental hygiene in the nation's growing cities.<sup>[17]</sup>

The mental hygiene movement won the allegiance of powerful social reformers, professors of psychology, and professors of education, many of whom taught in new schools of education and were, thus, particularly well situated to spread what was deemed a proper "viewpoint" to pre-service teachers. According to this viewpoint, education was a science that could be honed through experimentation to produce individuals capable of coping with the modern world. As such, the central purpose of education was a child's "adjustment" to society. With this goal in mind, the good teacher was instructed to redesign her curricula and recast her relationship to her students according to a paradigm in which the classroom was a clinic and the teacher was a diagnostician. Clearly echoing recent calls for a teacher to demonstrate correct dispositions, the good teacher was advised to alter her "attitude."<sup>[18]</sup>

The earliest adherents of mental hygiene were adept at spreading their philosophy of education, which they legitimated and professionalized through organizations, conferences, and publications. In 1909, they created the National Committee for Mental Health (NCMH), an association that aimed to "prevent mental disease and conserve mental health" through early diagnosis, the development of modern treatment facilities, research, and education.<sup>[19]</sup> To propagate their ideas, they published the journal, *Mental Hygiene*, which frequently featured articles by influential experts who adapted their research

for teachers. For example, the renowned psychologist Adolf Meyer wrote that cutting-edge psychological research demanded a redefinition of the teacher's role according to a more therapeutic viewpoint of education.<sup>[20]</sup> Meyer insisted that teachers should learn to conduct classroom-based mental health triage by diagnosing their students' mental difficulties and adapting their curriculum and pedagogy accordingly. In Meyer's educational paradigm, the good teacher would primarily serve to vaccinate students against the threat of mental illness.<sup>[21]</sup>

Educational psychologists and professors of education were among Meyer's most dedicated followers and they were the most aggressive propagators of the mental hygiene movement. First, they used collections of Meyer's lectures in their teacher-training class.<sup>[22]</sup> Then, from the 1920's to the 1950's, these experts steadily published mental hygiene guidebooks and handbooks of their own. These texts enshrined the therapeutic viewpoint in the teacher-training canon in the first half of the twentieth century. They are strikingly similar in content, and they present the therapeutic viewpoint as a catechism of teaching and learning, in which the therapeutic viewpoint is presented as a scientifically proven paradigm.<sup>[23]</sup> Many of the authors even included didactic questions with scripted answers at the end of each chapter for teachers to test their mental hygiene orthodoxy.<sup>[24]</sup>

The mental hygiene textbook also evidenced the early dominance of the No-Contest school of educational philosophy. My analysis of all of the mental hygiene textbooks archived in the largest extant textbook collection show that the four imperatives of "correct" teaching were individualized instruction, warmth or affection, letting the child develop at his own pace (i. e., "naturally"), and avoiding overtly competitive activities in which any child might be made to feel inadequate. For example, Dr. Daniel La Rue, author of multiple textbooks, urged teachers, whom he referred to as "pedagogical practitioners," to design curricula that would not challenge or overwhelm students, and to side-step the "discouragement and tear that result from defeat."<sup>[25]</sup> Dr. Mandel Sherman, Professor at the University of Chicago, dissuaded teachers from ranking students, as only a few would attain prominence, causing others to feel inadequate.<sup>[26]</sup> In contemporary terms we might think of this as the school activity where everyone's participation is recognized equally, regardless of ability, with an identical certificate.

The mental hygienist further bolstered his case by warning teachers that if they did not adhere to correct teaching they risked doing permanent emotional damage to their students. To this end, Dr. Percival Symonds, Professor of Education at Teachers College, unequivocally instructed his teachers-in-training that a student's "social adjustment was considerably more important than their learning of spelling and arithmetic."<sup>[27]</sup> Symonds urged teachers to defy the traditional emphasis placed on "the academic child," which he declared an adult invention.<sup>[28]</sup>

Certainly, many mental hygienists worked in alliances with other social reformers, such as settlement house women and teachers union organizers, who engaged in politics. However, while mental hygienists were clearly sympathetic to a No-Contest philosophy of education, it does not appear that they were impelled by political motives in defining the good teacher. In the 1930's a related movement for a psychoanalytic pedagogy would, however, demonstrate how the good teacher began to accrete political characteristics.

## The Neurotic Teacher

The second illustrative iteration of the good teacher that we can investigate to shed light on the history of dispositions testing is the neurotic teacher. Similar to the movement for the hygienic teacher, warnings *against* the dangers of the neurotic teacher enjoyed the imprimatur of the educational expert,

who in this instance sought to redefine the good teacher according to the tenets of psychoanalytic pedagogy. As I will show, despite a shift in the expert's framework from mental hygiene to psychoanalysis, the No-Contest philosophy of education remained immutable. In addition, while teacher trainers continued to warn that deviant teachers might cause emotional damage to students, their warnings also took on political overtones as they intimated that such teachers might produce an army of undemocratic citizens.

As historian Sol Cohen has described, Sigmund Freud's ideas percolated through American culture and, seemingly inevitably, into the field of education.<sup>[29]</sup> As Freud himself recognized, there was a powerful impulse among his early adherents to apply psychoanalysis to children as a prophylaxis to neurosis, a goal that resonated with many teacher trainers.<sup>[30]</sup> Indeed, many of the pioneers of psychoanalysis, including Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, Erik Erikson, and August Aichorn, were trained as both teachers and analysts.<sup>[31]</sup>

While the movement to apply psychoanalysis to education was short-lived in Europe, its central goal of preventing childhood neurosis took root in America where, in the 1920's and 1930's, it added credence to the No-Contest philosophy of education that held sway in schools of education. According to Freud's biographer, Nathan Hale, converts to Freudian ideology in the United States interpreted his theories in a way that was characteristically American. American converts, Hale writes, "were open-minded but incorrigibly eclectic, mixing and matching theories without much regard for their internal logic or consistency."<sup>[32]</sup> In this way, he explains, they created a version of psychoanalysis that was a panacea for social ills. This new theory and its attendant methods resonated with many teacher educators, who sought to redefine and retrain the good teacher accordingly. In concert with the No-Contest philosophy of education, the psychoanalytic pedagogue insisted that the good teacher should be primarily permissive, and should banish all forms of competition and punishment from the schoolhouse.

Again, professors of education spread their new vision of the good teacher in their own classrooms and through teacher training manuals. For example, Erwin Wexberg, in his 1927 *Your Nervous Child: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*, warned that teachers who employed competition and demanded academic achievement in the classroom would induce feelings of inferiority among their students with symptoms ranging from stuttering to masturbation.<sup>[33]</sup> Wexberg, who bolstered his authority by noting that he had studied with influential Austrian psychologist Adolf Adler, urged teachers to avoid inducing neuroses in their students by always remaining calm and never overtly reacting to a student's behavior. Rather, he instructed the good teacher to rearrange the educational environment to meet a misbehaving student's individual needs.<sup>[34]</sup>

Paul Witty, Professor of Education and Director of the Psycho-Educational Clinic at Northwestern University, and Charles Skinner, Professor of Education at New York University, similarly instructed their students that education's true function was to guard against producing "scores of misfits" who would become a nation of "unhappy inadequate adults."<sup>[35]</sup> To succeed in this task Witty and Skinner wrote in their 1939 textbook that the good teacher should replace "the primary education fetish" and focus instead on helping all children to "extend and reconstruct their experience."<sup>[36]</sup> To do this, they advised, the good teacher should close the gap between school and life by replacing English with Language Arts, which stressed skills of individual expression, and History with Social Science, which explored a person's relationship to his social-economic environment.<sup>[37]</sup>

Promoters of psychoanalytic pedagogy also delimited the qualities of the bad teacher who was cast as either neurotic or the authoritarian. In this instance, the advantage of hindsight allows us to see the

way that a seemingly infallible characterization of the good teacher can reflect values that are later proved untenable. Professors of Education at USC, Dean Katz and Ernest Tiegs, for example, counseled school administrators, who were mostly men, that they should avoid hiring single women teachers. These unmarried women, they explained in their 1941 guidebook, would lack a normal home life and thus become anxious and predisposed to nervousness as “year after year after year their youth and freshness faded.”<sup>[38]</sup> Norman Fenton, Professor of Education at Stanford University and Director of Guidance for the Menlo high schools, moreover insisted that such neurotic teachers were dangerous to their students because their phobias, fixations, and obsessions were literally contagious.<sup>[39]</sup>

The psychoanalytic pedagogist also warned against a particularly dangerous breed of teacher who imperiled students by demanding academic rigor. This teacher, who veered from the No-Contest philosophy of education and placed a student’s academic achievement above his emotional needs, was declared “autocratic.” In 1939 Teachers College professor Goodwin Watson, for example, cited Kurt Lewin’s pioneering research in social psychology to support his assertion that students were more likely to become hostile if their teacher imposed rules or asserted her authority.<sup>[40]</sup>

The psychoanalytic pedagogist’s definition of the good teacher as *not* autocratic (i.e., democratic) reflected a widespread concern in the 1930’s with the rise of fascism in Europe – this concern is particularly *unsurprising* in light of the fact that many of progenitors of psychoanalytic pedagogy came to America fleeing the Nazis.<sup>[41]</sup> Nevertheless, despite a reasonable political concern with tyranny and aggression, educational reformers shrouded their political ideal of the good teacher in the rhetoric of a new and rather ambiguous theory of the unconscious.

### **The Authoritarian Teacher**

The third illustrative iteration of the good teacher that we can investigate for antecedents to the social justice teacher and dispositions testing is the authoritarian teacher, which was legitimated by personality science. Like the advocates of the hygienic teacher and those who warned against the neurotic teacher, those who guarded against the authoritarian teacher embraced the No-Contest philosophy of education and veiled their claims in scientific jargon. Unlike their predecessors, however, advocates of personality testing created a test of the good teacher that undeniably conflated pedagogy and politics.

By the late 1930’s, courses in personality science were being taught in most American research universities, using textbooks that confidently delimited normality and abnormality.<sup>[42]</sup> By the late 1940’s, mass-produced personality tests purported to unlock the secrets of human nature through the use of simple questionnaires.<sup>[43]</sup> Perhaps inevitably, by the late 1940’s experts began using these tests to examine pre-service teachers. In this section I turn away from evidence of published teacher training manuals to examine the records of a group of researchers based at Bank Street College who sought to replace New York City’s teacher certification tests, which tested content knowledge, with teacher personality tests.<sup>[44]</sup>

The core members of this group of reformers were two powerful education school insiders and a well-known advocate for children: Dr. Barbara Biber, Director of Bank Street’s research division from 1950 to 1963; Dr. Roma Gans, Professor of Education at Teachers College from 1929 to 1959; and Dr. Viola Bernard, founder and Director of Columbia University’s Division of Community and Social Psychiatry from 1956 to 1969. These reformers designed a battery of attitudinal tests that would determine whether a candidate had the proper personality characteristics of a teacher, which they defined as flexibility, lack of hostility, emotional responsiveness to children, and creativity.<sup>[45]</sup> Clearly exhibiting

their allegiance to the No-Contest philosophy of education, they insisted that the good teacher would “help to unfold the world to the child,” while the bad teacher would prefer order and discipline, and would “stick to the curriculum.”<sup>[46]</sup>

To weed out the more authoritarian applicants for teaching positions, this group designed a battery of tests using cutting edge methods in dynamic psychology. For example, they created a draw-a-teacher test to gauge a teacher applicant’s rigidity. They asked candidates to visualize and then sketch themselves as a teacher. Drawings were later analyzed for evidence about a candidate’s attitude toward the teacher-student relationship by determining, for example, whether a classroom was arranged to facilitate child-centered instruction. An applicant who represented the teacher as the focus of the classroom or depicted a traditional classroom with children quietly working at desks was deemed an inflexible personality and ill-suited to the profession.<sup>[47]</sup>

This group of reformers also used a truncated version of the F-scale (F for Fascism), a personality test designed to indicate if a teacher applicant might be potentially authoritarian. Created by members of the Institute for Social Research (ISR), academic exiles from Nazi Germany, the F-scale was intended as a test for anti-Semitism, but expanded into a test of the relationship among personality, discrimination, and political ideology.<sup>[48]</sup> As ISR Director Max Horkheimer insisted, authoritarian individuals were “a latent threat against democracy.”<sup>[49]</sup> In other words, applicants who received high F scores would likely embrace a teacher-centered, competitive, academically oriented classroom, *and* they would be threats to American democracy.

While the F-scale’s creators may have been responding to their experiences in WWII Europe, the application of the F-scale in post-war America reflected liberal fear of the rise of American conservatism. In 1952, for example, researchers used the scale to test students at the Republican National Convention, predicting that the most authoritarian individuals with high mean F-scores would prefer military hero General Douglas MacArthur for President, while individuals with the lowest mean F-scores would prefer the intellectual Adlai Stevenson.<sup>[50]</sup> This application intimates a central flaw with the F-scale – in short, the F-scale only allowed for the possibility that conservative individuals might be authoritarian. To be sure, in 1960 another researcher explicitly pointed to this bias in the F-scale by developing an alternative D-scale (D for dogmatism), which measured an individual’s authoritarian potential, whether one’s ideology was derived from the right or the left.<sup>[51]</sup> Nevertheless, despite the fallacy of the F-Scale, efforts to test pre-service teachers for an authoritarian “personality syndrome” using this instrument continued into the 1960’s.<sup>[52]</sup>

Efforts to use the F-scale to test teachers for their authoritarian potential make clear the way that the No-Contest philosophy of education became aligned with a liberal political position. Moreover, it illustrates the way that a group of well-meaning reformers conflated an applicant’s preferred *pedagogy* with her *politics*. In this way, not only was an authoritarian teacher a bad teacher, she was, *ergo*, politically conservative. *Ipsa facto*, a politically conservative teacher was also assumed to be authoritarian and, *ergo*, a bad teacher. Like the more recent controversy over efforts to test for a social justice disposition, some applicants balked at what they saw as an ideology underlying the personality tests they took. In that instance, those who resisted were largely Catholic applicants who, perhaps reflecting their religious training and a more hierarchical family structure, preferred a more controlled educational environment.<sup>[53]</sup>

## Lessons from the History of the Good Teacher

I believe we can better understand efforts to redefine the good teacher as the social justice teacher in



light of such antecedents as the hygienic teacher, the neurotic teacher, and the authoritarian teacher. What follows here are three lessons gleaned from the history of the good teacher that make clear the pernicious nature of testing pre-service teachers for a social justice disposition.

### *The Priority of Paradigms*<sup>[54]</sup>

As the three iterations of the good teacher discussed here show, reformers have tended to bolster their preferred philosophy of education with the *gravitas* of science. Similarly to these previous efforts, dispositions testers have continued to draw on psychology and increasingly cognitive science to assert the validity of measures of a correct teacher attitude. It is useful here to recall a constellation of observations from historian of science Thomas Kuhn's classic work on scientific paradigms about the nature of science and how occasional paradigm shifts are required for new discovery. First, Kuhn importantly reminds us that science is not immune to dogma, politics, or the influence of social context.<sup>[55]</sup> In other words, just because you can measure something does not mean that it is meaningful or immutable. Second, as Kuhn warns, over time, professional communities become bound together around a set of shared beliefs, which are tenaciously woven into the fabric of a field in a way that makes them *seem* irrefutable.<sup>[56]</sup> Third, Kuhn points to the way that textbooks can insidiously legitimate and perpetuate even dubious claims in a way that can define a field.<sup>[57]</sup> In light of these observations, I suggest that education has become calcified around the No-Contest philosophy of education, which values a teacher's ability to cope with ambiguity and her flexibility, in a way that is, ironically, inflexible. While the No-Contest philosophy of education surely has value, it also has flaws. In particular, I believe that the No-Contest philosophy of education has contributed to the propagation of anti-intellectualism in American education.

### *The Persistence of American Anti-Intellectualism*

As the three iterations of the good teacher discussed here show, the No-Contest philosophy of education has a distinctly anti-intellectual cast. Similar to the previous efforts to define the good teacher, the characteristics measured in current teacher dispositions assessments value an applicant's interpersonal skills, attitudes, and communication skills over her content knowledge. Again, it is useful here to turn to historians for insight. As historian Merle Curti detailed in 1955, a central strain of anti-intellectualism in American culture has profoundly influenced American education away from theoretical learning and towards usable knowledge.<sup>[58]</sup> Historian Richard Hofstadter echoed Curti in his 1964 Pulitzer Prize winning *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* and argued that Americans shared a "distaste for intellect" and a popular "resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind" that manifest in preference for well-adjusted personality over a keen intellect.<sup>[59]</sup> In this light, I suggest that education school insiders revisit their adherence to the No-Contest philosophy of education and consider perhaps that the No Excuses approach to schooling may hold some value. This will require a concomitant effort to disentangle our pedagogical preferences from our politics.

### *The Dark Side of a Social Justice Litmus Test*

Finally, as the debacle of efforts to test a teacher's authoritarian tendencies showed, there can be a dark side to gauging a pre-service teacher's dispositions. As the F-scale sought to weed out anti-Semitism, I recognize that many NCATE member schools' social justice measures are attempts to root out such inexcusable failings as racism in pre-service teachers. However, also like the F-scale, they too seem to mask a political litmus test for a liberal ideology. Here it is useful to turn to Mark Bauerlein's recent article on the tenuous place of the conservative intellectual in academe.<sup>[60]</sup> As Bauerlein demonstrates, academia tends to deny the legitimacy of America's conservative tradition and the scholarly work of

conservative intellectuals. To Bauerlein's observation I would add that in schools of education, embracing this conservative tradition is, as historian David Labaree put it, heterodox. In this light, I suggest that educational reformers and teacher educators consider that a conservative pre-service teacher's beliefs (such as individual over collective rights, a faith-based approach to social services, the right to bear arms, and the efficacy of educational vouchers) are at least debatable positions. In any case, and by any measure, they clearly are not reliable indicators of whether an individual will be either a good or a bad teacher.<sup>[61]</sup>

## Conclusion

I believe dispositions tests are inherently flawed because, whether consciously or unconsciously, they inevitably reflect a dominant underlying educational philosophy, and an insistence that pre-service teachers share these views. Moreover, as I have argued, I believe that the No-Contest philosophy of education that dominates schools of education has become conflated with a liberal political ideology so that dispositions tests are, indeed, political litmus tests. Not only do I hold, then, that these tests are an abrogation of a pre-service teacher's right to her own political opinion, I also believe that such tests are detrimental to the field of education as a whole. In the end, I assert, such tests foster exactly the opposite of those characteristics the No-Contest philosophy holds dear – conformity, rigidity, and a lack of respect for diverse views of the world.

## References

[1] For an account of NCATE's decision see Paula Wasley, "Accreditor of Education Schools Drops Controversial 'Social Justice' Language," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vol. 52 (41), (June, 2006), A14. June, 16, 2006. For a description of terms in NCATE's standards see the organization's website at: [www.ncate.org/search/glossary.htm](http://www.ncate.org/search/glossary.htm).

[2] See, for example, the letters from the National Association of Scholars to the US Department of Education. Available online at [www.nas.org](http://www.nas.org). See also NCATE's President's response to these criticisms. Available at "NCATE News" online at [www.ncate.org/](http://www.ncate.org/). For a sense of the wide-range of opinions on this controversy and the intense responses it has provoked, see also the online discussion about teacher dispositions testing that *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, available online at <http://chronicle.com/forums/index.php/topic,27717.0.html>.

[3] See William Damon, "Personality Testing: The Dispositional Dispute in Teacher Preparation Today, and What to do about it," Fordham Foundation's Occasional Series, Vol. 2 (3). Available online at <http://edexcellence.net/doc/Damon%20final.pdf>.

[4] Alfie Kohn, *No Contest: The Case Against Competition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992)

[5] Abigail and Stephen Thernstrom, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2003).

[6] For a brief but useful history of accreditation, see Frank Murray, "The Role of Accreditation in Teacher Reform," *Educational Policy*, Vol. 14 (1), (2000), 40-59. For a thorough if somewhat dated history of teacher testing, see Walter Haney, George Madaus, and Amelia Kreitzer, "Charms Talismanic: Testing Teachers for the Improvement of American Education," *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 14 (1987), 169-238.

[7] Influential examples include E.D. Hirsch, who operates out of his Core Knowledge Foundation; Frederick Hess, who is a researcher at the American Enterprise Institute; Wendy Kopp, who started Teach For America; and Paul Peterson, Director of the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and Editor in Chief of the influential *Education Next*.

[8] For a history of normal schools, see Chris Ogren, *The American State Normal School: An Instrument of Great Good* (NY: Palgrave Macmillian, 2005). For the rise of scientism and the persistence of religion in American universities see Julie Reuben's *The Making of the Modern University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[9] Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2000). For the classic history of Progressive Education, see also Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School; Progressivism in American education, 1876-1957*, (NY: Knopf, 1961).

[10] See, for example, historian John Rury's excellent review, "The Irony of Revising Revisionism: Diane Ravitch on Twentieth Century School Reform," *Education Review*, July 10, 2001.

[11] See Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, *An Elusive Science: The Troubling History of Education Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[12] See David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[13] David Labaree, *The Trouble with Ed Schools* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 131.

[14] See Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).

[15] Labaree, *The Trouble with Ed Schools*, 132-135.

[16] For a comprehensive account of the mental hygiene movement, see Theresa Richardson, *The Century of the Child: The Mental Hygiene Movement and Social Policy in the United States and Canada* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989). See also Sol Cohen, *Challenging Orthodoxies: Toward a New Cultural History of Education* (NY: P. Lang, 1999).

[17] The entire text of Clifford Whittingham Beers, *A Mind that Found Itself: An Autobiography* (NY: Longmans and Green, 1981) is available online at the Gutenberg Project at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

[18] While beyond the scope of this essay, for a thorough discussion of the medicalization of education, see Stephen Petrina, "The Medicalization of Education: A Historiographic Synthesis," *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 46 (4), 2006.

[19] *The Mental Hygiene Movement: Origin, Objects, and Work of the National Committee and of the American Foundation for Mental Hygiene* (NY, The American Foundation for Mental Hygiene, 1938), n.a., 323-324.

[20] Helen Leland Witmer, *Psychiatric Clinics for Children* (NY: The Commonwealth Fund, 1940), xv.

[21] Witmer, *Psychiatric Clinics for Children*, 21.

[22] For discussions among teachers and educational reformers on the impact of Meyer's lectures on education, see Ethel Sturgess Dummer Papers, A-127, Schlesinger Library for the History of Women in America, The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Box 16, Folders 223, 227.

[23] This analysis is based on research in the Harvard University Libraries and the Harvard University Graduate School of Education's historical textbook collection, the largest in existence.

[24] See, for example, the end-of-chapter questions in Mandel Sherman, *Mental Hygiene and Education* (NY: Lonmans, Green, and Co., 1934).

[25] Daniel La Rue, *Mental Hygiene* (NY: The Macmillan Company, 1930), 365. La Rue also wrote *The Science and the Art of Teaching*, *Psychology for Teachers*, and *The Child's Mind and the Common Branches*.

[26] Mandel Sherman, *Mental Hygiene and Education* (NY: Longman's, Green and Co., 1934), 2.

[27] Percival M. Symonds, *Mental Hygiene of the School Child* (NY: The Macmillan Company, 1934), 13-14. Symonds' text was based on his course at Teachers College, "Adolescent Adjustments." He was also Chairman of the Subcommittee on Mental Hygiene in Schools at the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection.

[28] Symonds, *Mental Hygiene of the School Child*, 13.

[29] Sol Cohen, "In the Name of Prevention of Neurosis: Psychoanalysis and Education in Europe, 1905-1938" in *Challenging Orthodoxies* (NY: Peter Lang, 1999), 158.

[30] Sigmund Freud, "Foreward," in August Aichorn, *Wayward Youth* (NY: Viking Press, 1935), v.

[31] Bertram Cohler, "Psychoanalysis and Education: Motive, Meaning, and Self," in *Learning and Education: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, eds. Kay Field, Bertram Cohler, and Glorvye Wool (Madison, CT: International Universities Press, Inc., 1989), 11.

[32] Nathan Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in America: Freud and the Americans, 1917-1985* (NY: Oxford Press, 1995), 7.

[33] Erwin Wexberg, *Your Nervous Child: A Guide for Parents and Teachers* (NY: Albert and Charles Boni, 1927) 144.

[34] Wexberg, *Your Nervous Child*, 144.

[35] Paul Witty and Charles Skinner, "Introduction," in *Mental Hygiene in Modern Education*, ed. Paul Witty and Charles Skinner (NY: Farrar & Rinehart, 1939), 22.

[36] Witty and Skinner, "Introduction," 22.

[37] Witty and Skinner, "Introduction," 21. For similar ideas see Daniel La Rue, *Mental Hygiene* (NY: The Macmillan Company, 1930). Also La Rue's *The Science and the Art of Teaching, Psychology for Teachers*, and *The Child's Mind and the Common Branches*.

[38] Ernest Tiegs and Barney Katz, *Mental Hygiene in Education* (NY: The Ronald Press Company, 1941), 37.

[39] As quoted in Norman Fenton, *Mental Hygiene in School Practice* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1943), 290. The original source of this quotation is unclear.

[40] Goodwin Watson, "The Role of the Teacher" in *Mental Hygiene in Modern Education*, ed. Paul Witty and Charles Skinner (NY: Farrar & Rinehart, 1939), 508. See also the "Rank Order of Traits Showing Divergence Between Excellent and Poor Teachers" in Lester Crow and Alice Crow, *Mental Hygiene in Home and School Life for Teachers, Supervisors, and Parents* (NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1942), 192-194.

[41] See, for example, see the biography of Kurt Lewin by Alfred Marrow, *The Practical Theorist: The Life and Work of Kurt Lewin* (NY: Basic Books, 1969).

[42] Kenneth Craik, "The 1937 Allport and Stagner Texts in Personality Psychology," in *Fifty Years of Personality Psychology*, ed. Kenneth Craik, Robert Hogan, and Raymond Wolfe (NY: Plenum Press, 1993), 3-7.

[43] For a comprehensive and highly critical history of personality testing in the United States, see Annie Murphy Paul, *The Cult of Personality* (NY: Free Press, 2004).

[44] For a complete account of this effort to use teacher personality tests in New York City, see Jennifer de Forest, "New York's Failed Teacher Selection Project: Political Reality Trumps Educational Research," *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 108, No. 4, 2006.

[45] Draft Statement on Teacher Selection Research, November 1951. Papers of Viola Bernard, Archives and Special Collections, A.C. Long Health Science Library, Columbia University, Box 186, Folder 7, hereafter referred to as VB papers.

[46] Minutes from the Teacher Selection Project, October 27, 1947. VB papers, Box 148, F1.

[47] Minutes of the Meeting of the Teacher Selection Project, September 19, 1952. VB papers, Box 186, Folder 9.

[48] Marie Johda, Introduction to *Studies in the Scope and Method of "The Authoritarian Personality,"* ed. Richard Christie and Marie Johda (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1954), 11. Other members of the ISR included Theodore Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Lowenthal, and Felix Weil.

[49] Max Horkheimer, Foreword to *False Prophets: Studies in Authoritarianism*, Leo Lowenthal, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1987), 3.

- [50] Richard Christie, “Authoritarianism Re-examined” in *Studies in the Scope and Method of The Authoritarian Personality*, ed. Richard Christie and Marie Johda (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1954), 145.
- [51] John Kirscht and Ronald C. Dillehay, *Dimensions of Authoritarianism: A Review of Research and Theory* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), 11.
- [52] See, for example, W.H. Vermillion, W.H. Leftwich, and H.H. Remmers, *Anti-Democratic Attitudes in American Schools* (Northwestern University Press, 1963).
- [53] For details of the Catholic Teacher Association’s reaction to the personality tests, see de Forest, “New York’s Failed Teacher Selection Project.”
- [54] This subtitle is borrowed from the title of chapter five in Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).
- [55] Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 75.
- [56] See chapter one, “A Role for History,” in Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.
- [57] See chapter eleven, “The Invisibility of Revolutions,” in Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.
- [58] Merle Curti, “Intellectuals and Other People,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (Jan., 1955), 259-282.
- [59] Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (NY: Vintage Books, 1962), 5 and 7.
- [60] Mark Bauerlein, “How Academe Shortchanges Conservative Thinking,” *The Chronicle Review*, Vol. 53 (17), (Dec., 2006), B6. As for historians, in the last decade, they have begun to seriously investigate the rise of American conservatism, paying particular attention to what has been called “the other sixties.” See, for example, John Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans For Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (NYU Press, 1999); Rebecca Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960’s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), and John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America* (NY: The Penguin Press, 2004).
- [61] Andrew Porter and Donald Freeman offer an alternative method of assessing teachers, which would differentiate teacher performance from teacher beliefs. They also insist that those who demand tests of educational beliefs must show that they correlate with student achievement. See Andrew Porter and Donald Freeman, “Professional Orientations: An Essential Domain for Teacher Testing,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 55, No. 3, (Summer, 1986), 284-292.