

***Past and present: Eugenics, standardized tests, and politics of school reform:
Hoosier connections and challenges***

“If such a thing as a psycho-analysis of today’s prototypical culture were possible such an investigation would needs show the sickness proper to the time to consist precisely in normality.”
~ Theodore Adorno, *Minima Moralia*

“Consistent with notions of American identity, standardized testing, as an opposition to a cultural other, represents the normalization of whiteness, richness, and maleness.”
~ Andrew Hartman

YESTERDAY: THE HOOSIER CONNECTION: THE CULT OF EFFICIENCY

Ellwood P. Cubberly, Lewis Madison Terman, and David Starr Jordan: Eugenics scientific school management, and measuring “intelligence”

As the population grew during pre- and post-WW I America, public education had to adapt to the complexities of increasing immigration, urbanization, and industrialization. Out of this era arose a generation of progressive educators who were steeped in the *cult of efficiency* (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). They were led by national-class reformers with Indiana roots and connections.

Ellwood P. Cubberley (1868-1941) was born in Antioch (later Andrews), Indiana. He started out as a teacher in a one-room Indiana schoolhouse, which offered a single curriculum to all students. Cubberley came to regard this "one-size-fits-all" education as out of date. As head of the department of education at Stanford University (1917-1933), Cubberley trained a generation of administrators in the "science" of school management (Bernard & Mondale, 2001).

As a result, instead of offering all students the same classical college prep curriculum, now in the name of increased “social efficiency,” high schools now "tracked" students into a variety of educational paths (Gatto, 2003). According to Shutt (n.d.), Cubberley also:

- used tests and measurements as techniques to determine “educational efficiency” and to provide “scientific accuracy” to education
 - supported important concepts such as I.Q.
 - used tests and measurements as “efficiency indicators” to provide a basis for
 - re-organizing schools,
 - hiring and firing staff, and
 - assessing student performance
- pioneered the use of the school survey as an instrument to improve education
 - used statistical and quantitative methods to assess the strengths and weaknesses of individual schools

Shutt also noted that Cubberley compared educational process to industrial production, in that schools should strive to maximize efficiency and product. Anthony R. Welch (2010) agrees: Cubberley’s work was "...the origin and development of the adoption of business values and practices in educational administration." Welch saw the efficiency movement as based upon the idea that both individual worth and the work of education can be reduced to economic terms.

Tracking seemed an efficient way to sort through growing numbers of students. To determine placement, school administrators turned to a test invented by a colleague of Cubberley and fellow Hoosier, Lewis Madison Terman (1877-1956) who was born in Johnson

County, Indiana. In 1917, he prepared the standardized test to measure what was called a student's "intelligent quotient," or IQ. Paul Chipman, a biographer of Terman, noted that one reason the Stanford-Binet IQ test was created was to have a way to test every child in the public schools in order to have a better understanding of each individual's ability and capacity, creating a kind of "social efficiency" for the country (Painter, 2010).

Earlier during World War I, Terman and others field-tested the Army's Alpha and Beta Intelligence Tests developed by eugenics advocate Robert Yerkes (1876-1956) to test the "IQ" of 1.7 million US Army recruits. Scores on word and picture problems helped determine which men would be assigned desk jobs in Washington, DC, and which would be sent to the trenches in France (Bernard, & Mondale, 2001). In fact, Terman believed that the intelligence test was a "technology" that could transform the country and help America achieve a Utopia (Painter, 2010).

Early 20th century psychologists believed ethnicity affected intelligence. This idea had unintended consequences. Historian James Anderson concluded that to the extent there was a sense that IQ tests determined the quality of people by ethnicity, by race, and/or by class, the very belief in the capacity of people to learn was undermined--particularly by psychologists like Terman (Painter, 2010).

Interestingly, Cubberley was brought to Stanford by its new president and: a) former Indianapolis High School (later Shortridge) science teacher (1874-1875); b) Northwestern Christian University (later Butler) professor of biology (1875-1879); c) Indiana University professor of Natural History (1879-1884); and, d) Indiana University president (1884-1891), David Starr Jordan (1851-1931). While at IU, Jordan also created and taught a new course for elite students called "Bionomics." The class dealt with the "why and how of producing a new evolutionary ruling class of managers trained in the goals and procedures of new systems." Cubberley was one of Jordan's prized Bionomics students (Cuddy, 2002).

Influencing eugenics, the first sterilization, and the 1907 eugenics law: More Hoosier connections

According to historian Elias Kramer (2008), a major basis for the eugenic movement was the late 1870s study of the poor by Rev. Oscar C. McCulloch (Plymouth Congregational Church, Indianapolis). His argument that the state of being poor (pauperism) was due to a genetically inherited moral deficiency influenced 20th-century eugenicists who sought to improve the human race through better breeding.

Both Dr. Terman and Dr. Jordan became renowned eugenicists. Eugenics, also known as "racial hygiene" or "scientific racism," was based on the belief in the possibility of improving the qualities of the human species or a human population, especially by such means as discouraging reproduction by persons having genetic defects or presumed to have inheritable undesirable traits (dysgenics). One method was sterilization. As written by Stefan Kuhl (1994), the first sterilization in the United States was in Indiana. It occurred in 1899, and was called the "easiest measure to prevent the reproduction of inferior people." Indiana soon legalized sterilization, passing the world's first eugenics law in 1907.

Of course, reproduction by persons presumed to have inheritable desirable traits (eugenics) was encouraged. In fact, Better Babies Contests, rooted in eugenics, took place at state fairs. <http://www.stuffmomnevertoldyou.com/blog/better-babies-contests-eugenics-goes-to-the-fair/> Alexandra Stern explores this relationship between eugenics and infant health initiatives in her well-researched paper "Making Better Babies: Public Health and Race Betterment in Indiana, 1920-1935." See: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3222231/>

In the mid-19th century, a number of biological and social scientists came to believe that the genetic quality of the populations of the Western nations was deteriorating due to the relaxation of natural selection, the process by which nature eliminates the unfit in each generation through reducing their fertility and by early death. See Madison Grant's 1916 book, *The Passing of the Great Race* or Lothrop Stoddard's 1920 book, *The Revolt Against Civilization: The Menace of the Under Man*.

In 1901 (expanded in 1910), Jordan authored, *The Blood of the Nation: A Study in the Decay of Races by the Survival of the Unfit*. In it he originated the notion of "race and blood" declaring that human qualities and conditions such as talent and poverty were passed through the blood.

The book intended to promote the eugenics movement and bring its aims to the average person. Jordan hypothesized that much of the social decline after wars stemmed from the "dysgenic" effects of those conflicts, which destroyed the fittest and left young widows who did not remarry and produce more children. The implication was that the unfit were left to reproduce, and so, lead to "the collapse of civilization" (Williams, n.d.; David Starr Jordan, n.d.)

Also, both belonged to the Human Betterment Foundation a eugenics organization started in Pasadena in 1928 in order to compile and distribute information about compulsory sterilization legislation in the United States, for the purposes of eugenics. Dr. Jordan served as a member of the initial board of trustees (Williams, n.d.; David Starr Jordan, n.d.).

"The Indiana Procedure"

Other Hoosier connections to the Eugenics movement came during the 1947 trial of German doctors at Nuremberg. Nazi physicians testified that they got the idea for their sterilization program, which aimed at combating "racial degeneracy," from America. The German name for forced sterilization was "the Indiana Procedure" (Cuddy, 2002). Also see:

<http://kobescent.com/eugenics/bibliography.html>

In summary, the Cult of Efficiency had three stages:

1. eugenics (scientific racism) set the standards via defining normalcy
2. the IQ test sorted and ranked students
3. "scientific" school management provided the solution and was carried out through "tracking," and teacher and school evaluations done with "quantitative accuracy"

TODAY: THE HOOSIER CHALLENGE: THE CULT OF ACHIEVEMENT

NCLB, high stakes standardized test scores and the re-emergence of the Cult of Efficiency

Is the 1920's Cult of Efficiency re-emerging in the NCLB assumption that standardized test-based accountability is the best response to any and all real or imagined education problems? As was attempted by Cubberley, Turman, and Jordan almost 100 years ago, is the NCLB law trying to quantify *quality*--a quality teacher, student, school, district, and a quality education--through test score results?

The Cult of Efficiency becomes the "Cult of Achievement"

Presently, the Cult of Efficiency is returning in the form of the "Cult of Achievement." Each is based on tests and measurements which are said to use statistical and quantitative methods of assessment which provide "scientific accuracy" and thus serve as "efficiency indicators."

Two of the major examples of the Cult of Achievement are 1) "super parenting" and 2) the achievement gap. Super parents use pre-natal education systems (See www.babyplus.com) or other means by which they give their child/ren a head start. Also, there is the "exmissions"

phenomenon where parents plan out the child's education from pre-school on. Here, parents prepare to compete with other parents to get their child/ren into the "right" program or school, "tracking" them to be in a "Nursery University" (Catsoulis, 2009), or the best K-12 schools and colleges. Families even practice "red shirting" by keeping children back a grade so they can have a competitive edge in sports and academics. Other families keep their child/ren in Kaplan and other tutoring programs so they have an advantage in grades and test scores. "Success at all costs" best describes the Cult of Achievement.

The "Achievement Gap" concerns differences in scores on standardized tests among various groups, especially white and black students. To understand the various levels in achievement between white and black students, the gaps must be appreciated as the reflection of the differences between America's dominant and minority cultures. From the point of view of the majority, the cultural capital of African American community (language, values, behavior) is seen as deficient or defective and must be traded for the cultural capital of the dominant culture which is deemed superior and necessary for achievement and success. *Schools are the places where students become assimilated and standardized tests are used to judge how well they have acquired the cultural capital of the dominant society in the form of the state curriculum.*

So-called "mental defectives" were sterilized in the past under Eugenics laws using standardized tests to measure levels of intellectual capacities and abilities. Today, standardized test scores are used to determine how well students meet grade-level standards. Since historically it's the children of color and the working class poor who lack achievement, the gap implies (as it did in the 1920s) that those students unable to meet standards on standardized tests are deficient and depicted as lesser, or "in need."

Today interventions are used instead of sterilization

This deficient, even "faulty" quality is reinforced and validated by today's educational response. Instead of sterilization, interventions are used: tutoring, longer school days, teacher incentives, more and constant testing, mentoring, a longer school year, school uniforms, on-line courses, charters, and single genders schools and classes. These activities are to make up for the child's deficiencies and "lesser-ness." Yet, doesn't the very presence of these "interventions" actually enable a sort of neo-eugenics stigma placed on some students as "lacking" and being unfit?

The issue is standardized tests, be they IQ or ISTEP: Are these tests flawed and biased?

What is an issue here, and consequently the way No Child Left Behind (NCLB) justifies its major decisions, is the concern that standardized testing is fundamentally flawed and biased.

Wayne Au argues: If all the students passed at state's standardized test (i.e., the ISTEP used by the Indiana Department of Education [IDOE] to judge Indiana students and schools), that test would immediately be judged an invalid metric because *any measure of students which mandates the failure of students is an invalid measure* [italics mine] (Hagopian, 2012). What does this mean?

Au was referring to "norm-referenced measures" like the ISTEP which are designed to compare students. ISTEP is intentionally designed to disperse average student scores along a bell curve, with some students performing very well, most performing average, and a few performing poorly. For example, 34% are always "above average," 34% are always "below average." Seen from this perspective, Au has a valid point: *any official state assessments which in fact mandate the failure of any student is flawed.*

“...there will always be a testing a gap.”

Au's point is supported by James Popham (2004) who notes that since standardized tests must produce a wide spread of scores from high to low, exams must have a “wide range” of difficulty. So, which questions produce the widest range?--those most closely linked to socio-economic status (SES). He found that between 15-80% of the questions (depending on the subject area) on norm-referenced exams were linked to SES. With SES status out of the control of school officials, Popham concludes, there will always be a testing gap: children of the poor will tend to have the lower scores.

Is this the way our public schools measure learning by ensuring some will always score low, making high stakes standardized tests “A game without winners” (Popham, 2004)? Has this education policy become a racket enabling cheating by students, teachers, and school leaders (Robinson, 2013)?

“These studies [Joseph & Holland's “Equal Opportunity and Racial Differences in IQ”] show us that the races are equal; this result leads us to question the *construct validity* of many current standardized tests of verbal aptitude. [A]...review [of] my...studies...suggest a systematic underestimation of the ability of minorities. My studies question not only the *construct validity*, but also the *reliability* of the scores used to assess individual test performance, especially for minority students and even White students from lower socio-economic strata.”

~Dr. Roy Freedle (2012)

The SAT: Cousin of the IQ test (Bernard & Mondale, 2001)

So, not only is the issue that some students will always fail, but also: what is the norm and upon what is it based? Jay Rosen (2003) asserts it is based on “*white preference*.” “My considered hypothesis is that every question chosen to appear on every SAT in the past ten years has favored whites over blacks.” On the October 1998 SAT, for example, every single one of the 138 questions (60 math and 78 verbal) favored whites over blacks. By favoring whites, I mean that a higher percentage of white than black students answered correctly every question pre-screened and chosen to appear on that SAT. I call these ‘white preference questions.’” Rosen goes on to write, “Each individual SAT question RTS (Educational Testing Services) chooses is required to parallel the outcomes of the test overall. So, if high-scoring test-takers, who are more likely to be white, tend to answer the question correctly in pretesting, it's a worthy SAT question; if not, it's thrown out.”

In other words, although tests questions need not favor any group or individual, pre-screened test questions favoring African American students are taken out. Though this is a type of so-called “scientific” method of producing tests, it creates a biased exam.

“Standardized tests are the last form of legalized discrimination in the US.”

~ Phil Harris, co-author of *The Myth of Standardized Tests*, stated at the 01.05.12 Indianapolis Education-Community Action Team meeting

Meritocracy or “Testocracy”

If standardized tests are flawed, or if there are doubts concerning the authenticity of these measurements, America's promise of equal educational opportunity for all citizens is discredited. What is presented to Hoosiers as meritocracy (that ability and talent rather than class, privilege or wealth determines success) could actually be a “testocracy” (the increasing reliance on standardized test scores as status placement in society). For a closer look at this issue see: <http://dianeravitch.net/2015/01/23/lani-guinier-we-have-a-testocracy-pretending-to-be-a-meritocracy/>

Equal educational opportunity is not a system where those Americans who have the

financial, cultural, or political means to prepare for and pass standardized tests have an advantage over students who do not. Those who support the use of high stakes standardized tests claim the intent of the exam is to improve education for lower-income families, and children of color. But this method of accountability accomplishes the opposite.

"We are using the testocracy as a proxy for privilege."

~ Professor Lanni Guinier

...and what comes after testocracy? Alternatives to standardized tests

The researchers at the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) evidently see through to when "the current testing hysteria subsides." As reported by CES, their organization is critical in creating meaningful learning environments that include multiple assessment methods for multiple learning tasks. <http://essentialschools.org/benchmarks/performance-based-assessment/>

For more on alternative assessments see:

<http://www.newstips.org/2013/01/alternatives-to-standardized-tests/>

<http://www.standardizedtesting.net/standardized.htm>

"*Unequal By Design* critically examines high-stakes standardized testing, illuminating what is really at stake for students, teachers, and communities negatively affected by such testing. This thoughtful analysis traces standardized testing's origins in the Eugenics and Social Efficiency movements of the late 19th and early 20th century through its current use as the central tool for national educational reform via No Child Left Behind. By exploring historical, social, economic, and educational aspects of testing, author Wayne Au demonstrates that these tests are not only premised on the creation of inequality, but that their structures are inextricably intertwined with social inequalities that exist outside of schools."

~ HiPointDem, www.democraticunderground.com/1002565368#post5

A reminder of how and why standardized testing originally entered the public schools

The overuse and misuse of standardized testing--confusing higher test scores with better schooling--has been and currently is suspect. Parents, teachers, students, educators, board members, legislators, and community and faith-based organizations should distance themselves from this metric NCLB uses to justify its policies. As a community who love children, we Hoosiers need to take a deep and honest look into the history of standardized testing. When we do we will learn about:

- its connection to Eugenics (scientific racism)
 - Indiana was the global home of a codified Eugenics (normalcy) and used standardized testing to determine legalized sterilization actions
- its political and discriminatory characteristics
- its use to validate the prejudice that certain students' genetics (and implied home cultures) are inferior and certain other students' genetics (and implied home culture) are superior.

"In fact, I would argue that NCLB is itself a 21st century representation of eugenicist pseudo-science in its use of standards-based, Cartesian, modernist representation of what (literally) counts as learning and how it can be measured. This measurement of learning is a distinctly Eugenicist construct that has long been used as a way to sort people. NCLB ratchets this approach up a notch by sorting schools, not just individuals."

~ Phil Smith, *Whatever happened to inclusion? The place of students with intellectual disabilities in education*

The very idea that standardization, used to validate “normalcy,” was: 1) constructed, rationalized, and codified in the form of Eugenics laws right here in Indianapolis in 1907, and is 2) continually reinforced in 2013 by NCLB standardized testing requirements (such as ISTEP) which actually enable zero tolerance policies forcing certain students into “the school-to-prison pipeline” (Advancement Project, 2010), is in itself, enough reason for Hoosiers to take an honest and realistic educational position towards this historically biased form of academic measurement.

“Rather than accepting standardized testing as an essential entity, and argue for or against increasing it, my intention is to unmask standardized testing as an important form of social production that has served the American political economy. As a method of social production, as well as social reproduction, standardized testing has had serious cultural implications, not the least of which has been the eternal question of American identity. Consistent with notions of American identity, standardized testing, as an opposition to a cultural other, represents the normalization of whiteness, richness, and maleness.”

~ Andrew Hartman, *The Social Production of American Identity: Standardized Testing Reform in the United States*

A SUMMARY

If the IDOE does not discredit standardized tests, will public education be discredited?

Remember Herrnstein’s and Murray’s 1996 book, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, where the authors mixed science and measurement (standardized IQ tests) to generalize about racial differences in intelligence? This deficit model of humanity must first be reviewed and critiqued if Indiana is to honestly look at standardization measurements.

Why IDOE and the State Board of Education do not recognize and discredit the inherent limitations of using standardized tests (ISTEP) scores reflects on Indiana. To judge a student’s yearly all-over performance based on one score from one test given at one time on one day-- and under the pressured conditions of standardization and “high-stakes” which each student/family in Indiana and the nation experiences, may make sense to some educators, politicians, business people, or even families.

However, the standardization of high stakes tests is based on: 1) “normalcy” and epitomized via norm-referencing tests where some will always fail regardless of actual achievement, 2) a history of racial discrimination associated with the testing--particularly in how tests are calibrated--as well as the cultural bias associated with intelligence measurement such as IQ, and 3) the eugenic deficit model of humanity, a model with neither scientific nor moral merit.

There is also the legacy of Indiana’s leadership in eugenics law and official use of standardized tests regarding who or who did not get sterilized (The American, Henry Goddard, used the Binet-Simon Measuring Scale to determine degrees of intelligence or levels of feeblemindedness [Plucker, 2003]). IDOE cannot support equal educational opportunity while supporting such forms of measurement.

In conclusion

If there were a state in America which has reason to discredit and abandon the current era of high stakes standardized testing and use strength-based multi-measurements to assess student learning and schools, it is Indiana. These fairer methods are assessments which will challenge

the Indiana legacy of bias and discrimination dating back to Eugenic-inspired measures of intelligence (IQ tests).

We Hoosiers must begin the difficult task of removing once and for all any public doubt about the limitations of standardized tests. Once we shine the light of day on the social-political nature and purpose of high stakes standardized testing, no sensible Hoosier family or educator, and no enlightened employer, union, politician, community organization or faith-based institution will validate this product of the underbelly of American society.

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