

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION NATHANIEL LEES GAGE

(1917-2008)

Nathaniel Lees Gage, the Margaret Jacks Professor of Education (Emeritus), passed away on August 17, 2008. He had just turned 91 years old.

Gage was universally recognized as the father of research on teaching. He provided the stimulus for the scientific study of teaching with his seminal publication, *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (Gage, 1963; currently in its fourth edition). He created this field of study from earlier fragments of research and a personal vision of the emerging field that infused this edited volume. This was seen clearly in his own chapter on Paradigms for Research on Teaching (published about the same time as Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*; neither had heard of each other's work). Before the *Handbook* he had published two editions of *Educational Measurement and Evaluation*, with his mentor, H. H. Remmers (1943, 1955). A highly productive scholar, a series of books on teaching followed the *Handbook*—*The Scientific Basis of the Art of Teaching* (Gage, 1978), *Teacher Effectiveness and Teacher Education: The Search for a Scientific Basis* (Gage, 1972), *Hard Gains in the Soft Sciences: The Case of Pedagogy* (Gage, 1985), and most recently, published posthumously, *A Conception of Teaching* (Gage, 2009). Moreover, he founded the journal, *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, and along with colleague David C. Berliner, wrote six editions of *Educational Psychology*, which was the first textbook to treat teaching along side such traditional topics as learning and measurement. Throughout Gage's career, major journals published his articles, including classics in social psychology as well as articles in measurement, teacher education, methodology, IQ and race, and philosophy.

He was born in Union City, New Jersey, in 1917, the second child of Polish immigrants who met and married in the United States. His father, a member of the working class by ideology and circumstance (wallpaper hanger), had completed 6th grade; his mother had even less schooling. Nevertheless they provided a stimulating home environment for Gage and his brother (who became a professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago). Their home was steeped in classical music, politics and social activism.

Gage graduated from high school in 1934, in the midst of the Great Depression. The lack of family funds led him to put off college, working instead with his father in the paperhanging trade. Luckily, he heard that he could attend the City college of New York for free if he were a New York City resident, so he took his aunt's address and enrolled. Two years he later transferred to the University of Minnesota where he began his junior year. During his first quarter at Minnesota, he enrolled in an introductory psychology course taught by Richard M. Elliott, receiving a perfect score on his midterm, which entitled him to enroll in a special section of the course. The special section was taught by a dynamic and creative new instructor from Harvard, none other than B.F. Skinner. As a work-study student earning 50 cents per hour, he worked for Skinner, making food pellets for reinforcing rats, counting words in various word lists in support of the study of verbal behavior, and lettering captions for the figures in Skinner's *Behaviour of Organisms*; the last earned him a footnote in the book. Gage was also influenced by two graduate students he met there—Louis Guttman and J. B.

Carroll. He graduated Magna Cum Laude in 1938, with a bachelor's degree in psychology and election to Phi Beta Kappa.

Before graduation, he applied to 10 graduate schools for a doctorate in psychology. Despite his stellar academic record, Gage, whose original surname was Gewirtz, was rejected by every one. Richard Elliot explained: "From the university's point of view it would be pointless to take him into a graduate programme [sic] in psychology and waste resources training him, since he was Jewish. Even if he did, indeed, get a Ph.D., it would be difficult or impossible for him to find a job, given the depth of the depression and the prevalence of anti-semitism [sic]" (Berliner, 2004, p. 332). Gage assumed his new name in response to these societal pressures.

H. H. Remmers, free of prejudice, had just created a new program in psychology at Purdue University and searching for doctoral students, pulled Gage out of the rejected pile at his own alma mater. Gage's doctoral studies were interrupted several times, the first being an eight-month leave to the College Board to work on the development of the Scholastic Aptitude Test and the second for military service during World War II in the Army's aviation psychology program. A year after returning to Purdue he was hired by the University of Illinois in what became its famous Bureau of Educational Research, joining soon to be long-time colleague, Lee J. Cronbach. Gage and Cronbach chose to divide up their spheres of influence. Gage took teaching while Cronbach took measurement. Gage was at Illinois for 14 years before moving to Stanford in 1962, where Cronbach followed a year later.

Gage's involvement with the *Handbook* had its start at a 1950 meeting of the then fledgling American Educational Research Association (AERA), where an informal group met to discuss criteria for teacher effectiveness. A formal committee to address the topic was named; committee reports, often written by Gage (among the youngest of the committee members), were issued in 1952 and 1953. But little else happened. In 1955 a new AERA committee was formed; it conceptualized a handbook on teacher effectiveness as its product and named Gage as editor. The rest is history.

Throughout his long career, Gage's faith in social science was unshakeable. He insisted that there can be, and should be, a scientific underpinning for the art of teaching, and he never wavered despite changes in research fashions over the years. Both his empirical work and his faith in this work provided a basis for our contemporary commitment to a role for traditional science in education research, and in the social sciences in general. His achievements as an empirical scientist and as a defender of the scientific study of education brought him the respect of researchers of all methodological camps.

In recognition of his stature in the field, AERA selected him as the 1988 recipient of its Distinguished Contributions to Research in Education Award. He also received the prestigious E.L. Thorndike Award for Career Achievement in Educational Psychology from the American Psychological Association and, when 80 years old, flew to Europe to accept an honorary doctorate from the Université de Liège in Belgium.

A few years after Gage moved to Stanford, he co-founded and became co-director of the federally funded Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching. He and Robert Bush raised not only substantial research funding to build the field of research on teaching but also raised capital for a new building of the same name (now the CERAS building—Center for Educational Research at Stanford). The center allowed a whole generation of young (and now eminent) scholars to hone their research skills on problems of classroom life.

Nathaniel L. Gage Memorial Resolution—continued...

Throughout his career at Stanford, Gage was a model faculty member in teaching, research and service. Perhaps what stood out most, in spite of his stellar career, was his humanity. He was always approachable, caring, and humorous. He and his wife, Maggie, were famous for inviting graduate students into their home for a good meal and hours of conversation and laughter.

He was with family and friends when he passed away following surgery to remove a blood clot caused by a fall. He is survived by daughters Elizabeth, Sarah, and Annie, son Tom, their partners and spouses, and three grandchildren. His beloved wife of 64 years, passed away in 2006.

Committee:

Richard J. Shavelson (Chair)

David C. Berliner
(Arizona State University)

Edward H. Haertel