

O. Hobart Mowrer and the scandal of the Missouri “Sex Questionnaire” (1929)

José María Gondra

University of the Basque Country, Donostia-San Sebastián, Spain

INFORMACIÓN ART.

Recibido: 8 noviembre 2021
Aceptado: 29 noviembre 2021

Palabras clave
Marriage,
O. Hobart Mowrer,
Sexuality,
University of Missouri.

Key words
Matrimonio,
O. Hobart Mowrer,
Sexualidad,
Universidad de Missouri.

ABSTRACT

O. Hobart Mowrer (1907-1982) was a prominent figure in learning theory in the late 1930s and mid-1940s. After World War II he began practicing psychological counseling with students and his controversial views on psychopathology and religion, along with his criticism of psychoanalysis, had a great impact on the daily press as has recently been pointed out (Page, 2017). Mowrer's presence in the media, however, did not start at this stage of his career but goes back to the late 1920s, when he was an undergraduate student of psychology at the University of Missouri and circulated a sex questionnaire that caused public uproar in the state of Missouri and the rest of the United States. This article focuses on the questionnaire and the implications of the scandal for Mowrer and the history of psychology. I analyze his appearances in the press during his career, the social and intellectual context at the University of Missouri, the two parallel forms of the questionnaire – male and female. I also examine the impact of this episode on Mowrer's career and on American psychology and society as evidenced by its widespread press coverage and the report of the American Association of University Professors in defense of freedom of teaching and research.

O. Hobart Mowrer y el escándalo del “Cuestionario Sexual” de Missouri (1929)

RESUMEN

O. Hobart Mowrer (1907-1982) fue una figura prominente en la teoría del aprendizaje de finales de los años 1930 y comienzos de los 1940. Pero, tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial, Mowrer dejó el laboratorio para dedicarse a la práctica de la psicoterapia y sus polémicas opiniones sobre la psicopatología y la religión, junto con sus críticas al psicoanálisis, tuvieron un gran impacto en la prensa diaria, como se ha señalado en un artículo relativamente reciente (Page, 2017). Sin embargo, la presencia de Mowrer en los medios de comunicación no comenzó en esta etapa de su carrera, sino que se remonta a finales de la década de 1920, cuando, siendo estudiante de psicología en la Universidad de Missouri, distribuyó un cuestionario con unas preguntas sobre la sexualidad que causó un gran escándalo en el estado de Missouri y el resto de los Estados Unidos. Este artículo estudia el cuestionario y en sus implicaciones para Mowrer y, en general, para la universidad norteamericana. En él analizo las relaciones de Mowrer con la prensa a lo largo de su carrera profesional, el contexto social e intelectual en la Universidad de Missouri y las dos formas paralelas del cuestionario - masculina y femenina, para concluir con el impacto del escándalo en Mowrer y en la psicología norteamericana, como lo demuestra la amplia cobertura que tuvo en la prensa y el informe de la Asociación Norteamericana de Profesores Universitarios (AAUP), claramente favorable a la libertad de enseñanza e investigación.

I thank Gary Cox, reference archivist at the archives of the University of Missouri for his assistance in the preparation of the article.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to José María Gondra: Email: josemaria.gondra@gmail.com

ISSN: 2445-0928 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5093/rhp2021a17>

© 2021 Sociedad Española de Historia de la Psicología (SEHP)

Para citar este artículo/ To cite this article:

José María Gondra (2021). O. Hobart Mowrer and The Scandal Of The Missouri “Sex Questionnaire” (1929). *Revista de Historia de la Psicología*, 42(4), 2-15. Doi: [10.5093/rhp2021a17](https://doi.org/10.5093/rhp2021a17).

Vínculo al artículo/Link to this article:

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5093/rhp2021a17>

The scientific and professional career of O. Hobart Mowrer (1907-1982) is remarkable, not to say “curious,” as described by Corbin Page in his article on the religious period of Mowrer’s psychological activity (Page, 2017). Ranked among the one hundred most cited psychologists of the twentieth century in a survey of the *Review of General Psychology* (Haggblom et al., 2002), O. Hobart Mowrer became a leading authority in the study of learning and psychopathological processes in the late 1930s and mid-1940s. This leadership, however, faded away over time when he left experimental psychology and turned to religion as the source of life and health. His post-World War II writings on guilt and psychopathology were neglected by American psychologists and historians until Corbin Page argued in the article cited above that Mowrer’s theory of guilt illustrated the widespread cultural discomfort with clinical psychology and psychoanalysis in the 1930s-1960s. Mowrer’s theories, he wrote, “inspired the biblical counseling movement, an enormously influential movement that rejected the use of secular therapists and accepted the Bible as the primary guide to mental health” (Page, 2017, p. 2).

However, when discussing the enormous press coverage of Mowrer’s criticism of psychoanalysis and mainstream psychology, Page seems to forget that Mowrer’s presence in the media occurred throughout his career and began in the late 1920s when he was an undergraduate student of psychology at the University of Missouri and circulated a “sex questionnaire” that caused public uproar in the State of Missouri and the rest of the United States.

The events that unfolded at Missouri in March and April 1929 have been thoroughly described by Lawrence J. Nelson in *Rumors of Indiscretion: The University of Missouri “Sex Questionnaire” Scandal in the Jazz Age* (Nelson, 2003). O. Hobart Mowrer, however, is only a part of a narrative that covers every aspect of the scandal and consequently pays limited attention to the impact on Mowrer’s personality of this seemingly failed first research project. Furthermore, Nelson focuses his analysis on the female version of the questionnaire and leaves aside the parallel male version, making it impossible to assess the differences between the two.

This essay aims to examine the entire questionnaire and the impact of the scandal on Mowrer and on 1920s America. I review Mowrer’s changing career, his appearances in the press, the social and intellectual context at the University of Missouri, the two parallel forms of the questionnaire -- male and female -- and the impact of the scandal on Mowrer’s life and later work as well as on American psychology and society as evidenced by its widespread press coverage and the report of the American Association of University Professors in defense of freedom of teaching and research.

O. Hobart Mowrer’s Career

Mowrer began his career in the mid-1920s at the University of Missouri, where he enrolled in the hope that psychology would help him to solve his personal problems, as we will see later. After leaving Missouri in September 1929, he went to Johns Hopkins University to work with Knight Dunlap (1874-1949), whose *Social Psychology*

(Dunlap, 1925) had impressed him as the first attempt to interrelate psychology and sociology. Dunlap encouraged him to investigate the vestibular and visual functions related with spatial orientation and under his tutelage Mowrer completed his PhD dissertation in 1932. His investigations with pigeons, chickens, birds and ducks (Dunlap & Mowrer, 1930; Mowrer, 1934, 1935) and his research in the two following years at Northwestern and Princeton universities as a National Research Council fellow earned him a post at the prestigious Yale Institute of Human Relations.

After coming to Yale in the fall of 1934, O. Hobart Mowrer spent two more years investigating the effects of body rotation on dizzy pigeons (Lemov, 2005). But he soon joined a group headed by the neobehaviorist Clark L. Hull (1884-1952) and played an important role in the 1936 informal seminar on the integration of Freud’s and Pavlov’s theories, which produced, among other contributions, the popular book on the frustration-aggression hypothesis (Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer & Sears, 1939).

An accomplished experimentalist, he built up the experimental apparatus that served to demonstrate the reinforcing value of the escape from fear and devised a neobehaviorist explanation of anxiety as an aversive inner state announcing a “danger situation” (Mowrer, 1939b). These investigations were followed by an experimental model of anxiety learning (Mowrer, 1940a), a neobehaviorist interpretation of Freud’s defense mechanisms (Mowrer, 1940b) and an explanation of the process of inhibition (Mowrer & Jones, 1943) which deserved a lengthy commentary in the *Principles of Behavior* (Hull, 1943).

The results of the experiments, however, did not conform to Hull’s drive-reduction theory, since learning was associated with the beginning of the shock rather than its termination, as expected. On the other hand, avoidance reactions were so diverse and varied that they could not be considered conditioned reflexes. Apparently, what the electrical shock activated in the rat was a disposition to action called anxiety (Mowrer & Lamoreaux, 1946). Guided by these considerations, Mowrer postulated two different processes: learning of sign ruled by classical conditioned principles and learning of solution regulated by those of operant conditioning (Mowrer, 1947, 1951). While the former mediated in the acquisition of emotions, meanings, attitudes, and cognitions, the later explained habit acquisition under the Law of Effect.

A few years later, Mowrer hypothesized that the stimuli associated with the onset of shock generated fear, while the stimuli related to its elimination produced the opposite emotion of hope with the consequent behaviors of approaching (Mowrer, 1960a). This meant a significant approach to the purposive behaviorism of Edward C. Tolman (1886-1959), whose sign-gestalt theory was challenging Clark L. Hull’s deductive behaviorism (Rosas, 2021; Tolman, 1933, 1948).

These contributions gave Mowrer prominence among psychologists to the point that he was elected president of the APA in 1954. But a few years earlier, his career underwent a radical change when he met the neo-psychoanalysts Frieda Fromm-Reichman (1889-1957) and Harry Stack Sullivan (1892-1949) in 1945 while working in Washington for the Office of Strategic Services. In particular, a seminar taught by Sullivan at the Washington School of Psychiatry

convinced him that the leading cause of his mental problems was to be found in his conflicting interpersonal relationships with the “significant others.”

Influenced by Sullivan’s interpersonal theory of personality, Mowrer revealed to his wife that he had occasionally been unfaithful to her when he tried to overcome his sexual repression during his psychoanalytical treatment. This confession had a more positive effect than the countless hours he had spent on the couch of psychoanalysts. Apparently, the real cause of his mental problems was the repression of guilt for his past transgressions (Mowrer, 1966, pp. 17-19).

Mowrer began to insist that psychology should also consider the religious view of behavioral disturbances (Mowrer & Ullman, 1945, p. 86), and he tried to verify his theory of guilt in psychological counseling with students.

In December 1947, in a speech for the meeting of the American Association of the Advancement of Science, Mowrer stated that Freud never fully understood human anxiety, because this was “a product, not of too little self-indulgence and satisfaction, but of too much; a product, not of overrestraint and inhibition, but of irresponsibility, guilt and immaturity” (Mowrer, 1950, p. 538). The target of repression was not the impulses of the id as Freud claimed, but the feelings of guilt for wrongdoing committed.

These criticisms of psychoanalytic theory were accompanied by an emphasis on religion as a guide to achieve health of body and soul. For example, in an article on the concept of sin, he recommended to use this religious notion as a substitute for that of mental illness so that psychology could be liberated from its dependence on psychiatry (Mowrer, 1960b). Neurotic people were not the innocent victims of a rigid Freudian superego imposed by over-demanding parents, but sinners who had to repent of their evil deeds if they wanted to start a healthier life.

The article drew much criticism from the psychologists, starting with Albert Ellis (1913-2007), the founder of *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy*, who pointed out that neurotic people only became villains if they irrationally accepted the moralistic views from the members of their social group defining them as sinners (Ellis, 1960).

Insensitive to these remarks and estranged from academic psychology, Mowrer continued to challenge psychological therapies for their failure to recognize guilt as the cause of neurosis (Mowrer, 1960b, 1961, 1964, 1967, 1968). Finally, in the fall of 1969, he offered his first seminar on “Integrity Groups,” a new form of humanistic therapy that insisted on the healing role of confession, restitution, involvement and caring (Mowrer, 1972), and they did not seem to have had much influence due to their rigor and control of people (Gondra, 2019).

Presence in the Media

Mowrer’s religious period writings received a remarkable amount of press attention, but this phenomenon is not limited to this stage of his career. A few years earlier, when working at Yale University, he submitted to the forty-sixth annual meeting of the

APA an experiment with a group of 20-25 preadolescent “problem” children at the New Haven Children’s Center, who were subjected to two different training methods: a) arbitrary management of disciplinary problems for one year; b) “guided” self-government for another year (Mowrer, 1939a). As the condition of self-government gave best results regarding personal adjustment, he concluded that “the psychological appeal and force of fascism ... have roots in the traditional autocratic practices of child-training and discipline” (Mowrer, 1938, p. 660).

This reference to fascism at a pre-war period immediately drew the attention of the press. Thus, the *Evening Republican* of Columbus, Indiana, reported that Mowrer had stated that “Little Fascists, instead of democratic-minded children are being reared in the majority of American homes and schools” (Says children are fascists, 1938, p.5). “Don’t raise ‘Nursery Nazis’” was the sensational title of another article by a respectable doctor published in the daily newspaper of North Carolina *The Burlington Daily Times-News* (Tone, 1939, p.4). As shown in figure 1, “American Home Turns Out Fascists, Says Professor” was the title of the article published in the Californian *Oakland Tribune* by the Associated Press science editor (Blakeslee, 1938, p.9).



Figure 1: *Oakland Tribune*, 1938, Sept. 9, p.9

Mowrer was in the front pages of the newspapers even earlier when, still an undergraduate student of psychology at the University of Missouri, he circulated a “sex questionnaire” that scandalized the conservative people of the city of Columbia, home of the University, which forced him to deal with the press.

This episode, so little studied by historians, is worth analyzing and understanding because it represents the well-documented first attempt to use the questionnaire method in sexuality research and sheds new light on the conflict between Victorian Society and the leading American intellectuals in the 1920s (Coben, 1991).

The University of Missouri

Missouri State University was established in 1839 in the city of Columbia, the county seat of Boone County, with a nearly a thousand inhabitants. Surrounded by a prosperous farming community, the people there could be characterized as progressive in economic policies, conservative in politics and forward-looking in educational matters (Stephens, 1962).

The university was founded in Columbia because the citizens pledged the largest amount of money and land to have it built there. The rest of the state considered the new university as primarily a Boone County institution and the legislature was reluctant to make appropriations for support and maintenance.

The first president of the university, John Hiram Lathrop (1799-1866), and those who succeeded him had to run the university amid financial difficulties arising from the settling of the university location based on the auction principle and from the party politics of the Board of Curators.

The outbreak of the American Civil War brought about the suspension of the university due to persistent charges levied against it for disloyalty to the Union. But after the war the university experienced extraordinary growth, especially from 1891-1908 under the leadership of President Richard H. Jesse (1853-1921).

In January 1892, six months after Jesse's inauguration, the university suffered a disastrous fire. The event was used by those that had never accepted Columbia as its home to demand the university be transferred to Sedalia in the western part of the state. Jesse reacted vigorously to these requests and launched a major construction program which included the new administration building and many other new buildings opened in 1895. The modernization process also required the founding of new departments staffed with able young men from prestigious universities, including Professor Max F. Meyer (1873-1967), a doctor from the University of Berlin called in June 1900 to establish the department of experimental psychology.

Jesse's tenure might have lasted longer had it not been for the breakdown of his health, which forced him to resign in 1908. His successor as president, Albert Ross Hill (1868-1943), restored the vitality of the best years of Jesse's tenure and consolidated the process of transformation from a small and local institution into a real and qualified university of the state.

The election in 1923 of Stratton Duluth Brooks (1869- 1949) as president of the University brought problems with it. He had graduated from the Michigan State Normal College and from the University of Michigan and became a teacher and school administrator in the public schools of different states until 1912, when he was elected president of the University of Oklahoma. There he vigorously opposed those politicians who were trying to bring the professorial staff under their dominion, and the governor of the state was determined to get rid of him. It was thought that he might be receptive to proposals from Missouri, but there was a considerable group that believed the board of curators should have chosen a man of wider experience and more prestige. In subsequent years he was criticized for not being democratic with faculty and pouring a huge sum of money into remodeling the president's residence according to his will.

From Protestantism to Psychology

In one of his autobiographical writings, Mowrer chose this significant title for the section on his childhood and early youth (Mowrer, 1966, p. 2). Born in 1907 on a farm in rural Putnam County near the Iowa border, he was the youngest son of relatively middle-aged parents. When he was a child of six years old, his family moved to Unionville, Putnam's County seat of about 2,000 people. Living on Main Street in a house with a large garden, he had a happy childhood until his father's death after a short illness and failed surgery. According to his testimony, "Those were Idyllic years for me ... But this world suddenly crumbled for me with the death of my father on March 20, 1920, when I had just turned 13" (Mowrer 1974, p. 331).

The loss of his father was a shock to the whole family. Mowrer's mother became depressed, sold their home, went to live in the country with her daughter and left her son in town with a family she knew so that in September he could enroll in high school. A few months later, young Mowrer sank into a depression characterized by feelings of depersonalization and unreality that lasted upward of two years. He consulted several physicians but none of them was right in treating what he later thought was related to his sexual conflicts and his fear of talking about them with anyone.

Neither was religion of great help for him, despite his prayers. As he wrote in his autobiography:

School counselors were unknown in those days, and I grew up in a church where our ministers often proclaimed, as a great virtue, that we Protestants, unlike those foolish Catholics, did not confess our sins to "another human being" but rather took our troubles "to God in silent prayer." Under this ideology I prayed, without effect – and remained silent! It was this experience, more than anything else, that made me decide to go into psychology as a profession. I was looking for an "answer" which apparently did not exist in the "culture" in which I grew up (Mowrer, 1974, p. 346).

Since medicine and religion did not help him, Mowrer turned to psychology and in September 1925 enrolled at the University of Missouri, where he met Max F. Meyer, head of the psychology department. Mowrer excelled as a student and enjoyed the collegiate mix of fraternity fun and joy characteristic of the Jazz Age (Coben, 1991). Although he was occasionally depressed, he enjoyed playing weekends in a student band that he joined in the second semester of his freshman year. In the summer, the group was invited to play at a dance pavilion located in Boulder, Colorado, where he could rest and enjoy the pleasures of modern life.

The following summer Mowrer travelled to Europe with a small band playing aboard a Canadian Pacific ship carrying several groups of tourists. He enjoyed the British Museum and admired the parks and gardens of Paris, a city in which he had unique experiences. For instance, looking at the city from Montmartre, he wrote, "I came nearer to having a mystical experience, and to "knowing God," than any other time in my life. It was indeed a "peak experience", which in a minimal way has never left me" (Mowrer, 1966, p.12). On returning from Europe, he started up his own dance band and played student parties and local jazz joints.



Figure 2: Missouri U. College Inn Band c. 1929. Mowrer is the second from the left (Courtesy of University Illinois Archives)

Mowrer alternated these recreational activities with the study of new experimental psychology in the department led by Max F. Meyer. Born in 1873 in the city of Danzig, Germany, Meyer earned his Ph.D. at the University of Berlin with a dissertation on the sense of hearing that was praised by Max Planck (1858-1947), professor of theoretical physics. Max Planck's scientific objectivism, together with Erns Mach's anti-metaphysical positivism, contributed to Meyer's conception of psychology as a natural science closely related to neurophysiology (Esper, 1966).

In 1898, Meyer had to leave the University of Berlin after publishing an article on experiments contrary to the conception of musical "dissonance-consonance" advocated by Carl Stumpf (1849-1936), his doctoral dissertation director and head of the psychology department. After a brief stay in the University College of London, at the end of March 1899 Meyer embarked for the United States, and the following year was called to the University of Missouri. Although his main interest was psychoacoustics, Meyer worked with dedication and effort in teaching psychology courses and establishing a laboratory for psychological research (Esper, 1967). He wrote textbooks for the students, such as *The Fundamental Laws of Human Behavior*, in which psychology was defined as a science of behavior before the behaviorist 'manifesto' of John B. Watson (1913). As Meyer made clear in the preface, his main purpose was "to explain hypothetically the facts of human behavior as dependent on the function of the nervous system" (Meyer, 1911, p. xv). Later, in *Psychology of the Other-One* (Meyer, 1921), he insisted that psychology, unlike neurophysiology, had to be a science focused on behaviors of social relevance.

During his tenure at Missouri University Meyer worked by himself with the help of able assistants like Robert M. Ogden (1877-1959) and the German-born social behaviorist Albert P. Weiss (1879-1931). The young Mowrer joined this list in the 1928-1929 academic year when Meyer promoted him to the post of paid laboratory assistant, which meant an official relationship with the university beyond his status as student.

The Scandal of the "Sex questionnaire"

Driven by his interest in social psychology, Mowrer enrolled in the course on "Family" that was taught in the department of sociology by Harmon O. DeGraff (1886-1967). Since the course required the realization of an original research project conducted by four-member committees, Mowrer's group chose as topic "The effect of the economic independence of women on married life." To this end, they constructed a questionnaire to be distributed to almost a thousand students that included three questions dealing with their attitudes toward extramarital sexual relations. Mowrer intended to use the questions in a thesis that would enable him to graduate with distinction in psychology because, as he wrote, "in the late 1920's there was a lot of talk about "changing sex standards" (Mowrer, 1966, p. 13).

The years after World War I were a time of change in American culture and society (Dumenil, 1995), and sexuality began to be considered from a more open perspective than that of Victorian Puritanism (Coben, 1991). Mowrer attempted to assess these changes with the questionnaire method, a research procedure that was beginning to be used in sociology at the time. In the late 1920s sex questionnaires were administered in a few universities such as Bucknell in Pennsylvania and Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, but none had as much social impact as Mowrer's (Nelson, 2003). Hence, it seems to be first well-documented questionnaire antedating others such as those used by Lewis M. Terman (1877-1956) in his investigation on marital happiness (Terman, 1938), and Harold T. Christensen (1909-2003) in his cross-cultural research of the late 1950s (Christensen, 1960; Christensen & Carpenter, 1962).

The questionnaires were sent to the students along with several hundred return envelopes bearing the name "Bureau of Personnel Research" that Meyer gave Mowrer. The envelopes belonged to a committee on personnel research and vocational guidance organized by Meyer that never became operative because it was dissolved by President Brooks in 1925.

With the approval of Meyer, DeGraff and other professors, the questionnaires were placed in the students' mailboxes at the university's main campus in Columbia, along with a letter of introduction and the return envelope addressed to Bureau of Personnel Research, 405 Jesse Hall, with instructions to drop it in any university messenger box.

The reaction of the press and the public was vehement when a copy of the questionnaire came to the attention of the editor of the Columbia *Daily Tribune*, who, on March 13, 1929, published an explosive editorial about a filthy questionnaire circulating at the University of Missouri that should never have been given to young students because of its immoral and perverted characteristics.

The scandal spread across the city of Columbia and the state of Missouri, giving rise to much press criticism against the university and those responsible for the questionnaire. The *Jefferson City Post-Tribune* published a front-page article that said "The University of Missouri campus was astir today as President Stratton D. Brooks got under way his investigation into use of 1000 men and women students as the basis of a questionnaire research into sex and marital

relations.” (Campus astir as Brooks probes questionnaire, 1929, p.1). The article went on to report that Brooks ordered confiscation of the questionnaires and promised further action after completing his investigation into the “Bureau of Personnel Research.” After giving the names of the professors involved in the scandal, along with the student O. H. Mowrer of Unionville, the article went on to say that Brooks “denounced the ‘bureau’ as having no official standing in the university. He also ordered confiscation of all additional replies to the questionnaires pending the outcome of his investigation” (Campus astir as Brooks probes questionnaire, 1929, p.1).

The St. Louis Star and Times reported that “Mrs. Bessie Leach Priddy, dean of women, is said to have written a letter to Dr. Brooks this morning suggesting that an investigation be made and that no additional questionnaires of this nature be allowed to reach Missouri co-eds.” (“Questionnaire on sex seized at Missouri U.”, 1929, p.1).

The social pressure on President Brooks to take drastic disciplinary measures was increasing day by day. He had to cope with the strong reaction of the Columbia business and professional men demanding the dismissal of those responsible for the questionnaire. On March 15, *The Jefferson City Post-Tribune*, along with the announcement that O. H. Mowrer had surrendered the 200 original replies to the university secretary for safe keeping in the vaults, reported:

North Todd Gentry, Columbia attorney general and former Missouri attorney general and supreme court judge, continued to circulate among business and professional men and alumni a petition demanding “investigation and the immediate discharge” of anyone connected with the university found to be responsible for circulation of “such an indecent and vulgar communication” (“Missouri U. Curators called to investigate the sex questionnaire,” 1929, March 15, p. 1).

The mayor of the city of Columbia was among the cosigners of the petition, as reported by the *Joplin Globe* (“University Board will probe quiz,” 1929, p. 1).

Brooks also had to contend with a group of state legislators calling for an investigation into the university. Indeed, the house appropriations chairman from Jefferson City threatened to curtail funds unless the university took decisive action against those responsible for the questionnaire. They were making up the budget for the university and many of them would be willing to cut the appropriations if professors and students involved were not dismissed.

In the college, the events unfolded in a way that Mowrer never could have had anticipated. On March 16, newspapers reported that President Brooks had closed the “sex questionnaire” inquiry until the executive board of curators convened in special session on March 19.

In chapter 4 of *Rumors of Indiscretion* Lawrence J. Nelson discusses in detail the special session of the executive board that took place in the President’s office on March 19 at 3 p.m. The three curators responsible for the investigation questioned college alumni, students and professors involved in the scandal and debated what should be done. President Brooks favored firing both Meyer and DeGraff,

but after a long discussion, they decided to pause at midnight and continue the next day.

At noon on March 20, the executive committee made public a statement signed by the secretary of the university announcing the suspension of professors Meyer and DeGraff as well as the withdrawal of Mowrer’s status as an assistant professor, although he could continue at the university as a student. The curators justified their decision with arguments such as the immoral condition that would cause an investigation aimed to eliminate it, its lack of scientific validity, and the “radically mistaken conception of the essential conditions that must prevail in order to establish and maintain the public confidence in the university” (Nelson, 2003, p.90).

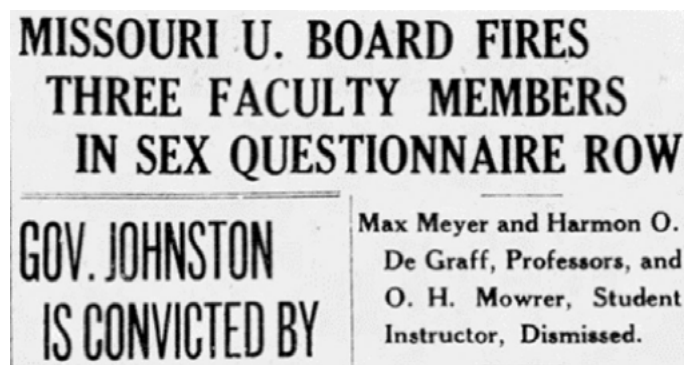


Figure 3: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 20, p.1

Mowrer’s name occupied a special place in front-page articles, including the headline in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* shown in figure 3. The news of the expulsion of the three faculty members quickly spread across the country. The correspondent for *The Baltimore Sun* published a long article under the caption “School ‘Sex Questionnaire’ rocks state of Missouri,” in which he stated:

Apparently, the questionnaires did not cause a campus sensation or stir the students unduly – save, perhaps, in the cases of a few freshmen, for they had been in circulation for almost two weeks before any public mention was made of them. But some parents got hold of them; then some ministers; then some editors, and soon the contents were public property. And from these older heads came such an uproar as Missouri has seldom heard (Fleming, 1929, March 23, p. 1).

The *Baltimore Sun* continued reporting on the professors’ dismissal in the following days in articles openly critical of the University of Missouri. For instance, on March 26 it published a photo of Max Meyer on the front page with the title “Victim of ‘Sex-Canvass’ row is world-famous professor” (Fleming, 1929, March 26, p. 1).

Mowrer’s portrait also appeared in newspapers like the *Sedalia Democrat*, which featured him as a “student assistant instructor in psychology... dismissed from the faculty” (Dismissed for Sex Questionnaire, March 21, p. 3). A few days later, his photo was

published throughout the country, together with the announcement of his dismissal from the faculty, as seen in the picture from the *Lincoln Evening Journal* of Nebraska in figure 4.



Figure 4: *The Lincoln Evening Journal*, March 27, p.18

Not all reactions of the Missouri people were adverse, however. The progressives came out in defense of academic freedom (Birkhead, 1929) and the students presented a letter with seven hundred signatures in which it was requested that the professors not be expelled. They also called a rally to protest the expulsion of the teachers.

The decision of the executive committee was ratified by the board of curators at a meeting held in Columbia, at 9 a.m. on April 6. The meeting lasted until 2:15 p.m. and continued Sunday morning amid great expectations. Finally, the curators decided to approve the report of March 20, although reducing Professor Meyer's dismissal to one year suspension of employment without pay "in view of his

long service to the university and our conviction that the offense for which he was suspended will not be repeated" (Nelson, 2003, p. 156).

The board also decreed the destruction of the questionnaires kept in the University Secretariat. As the *Jefferson City Post-Tribune* reported: "The two hundred or more sex questionnaires to which replies were made by men and women students of the University of Missouri have been destroyed by fire" (Fire puts end to questionnaire, 1929, p.1).

The press throughout the country echoed the dismissal of those responsible for the questionnaire. The general opinion was that professors did not deserve such draconian punishment and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) immediately undertook their defense because such punishment was a flagrant violation of academic freedom.

The Questionnaire

The "sex questionnaire" had two parallel versions, one for male students and another for female students. The questions for women were published in the *Bulletin of the AAUP* as an annex to the report on the academic freedom at the University of Missouri written by the special committee to investigate the decision of the board of curators (Bordwell et al., 1930). The male version is kept in the University of Missouri Archives, which has allowed us to show a copy of the first six questions in figure 5.

The questionnaire had such a social impact because it dealt with intimate questions on love, trial marriage, divorce and courtship, which were highly debated at a time of change in sex standards; but scientifically it was poorly constructed college schoolwork, as Mowrer himself recognized in one of his autobiographical writings (1974, p. 332).

The letter of introduction signed by the Bureau of Personnel Research could not be more inopportune, since it was written in a language that might be offensive to some parents and conservative citizens of Missouri. It began by pointing out the deep crisis of the marriage system, an expression that would give offense to those people for whom marriage was a sacred union rather than an institution. Then it spoke about the causes of the crisis in terms even more offensive: "*unfortunately, the whole matter has been so inextricably bound up with religious dogmas, moral sentiments, and all manner of prudish conventionalities as to make it exceedingly difficult to ascertain with any degree of accuracy the precise reasons for this situation*" (Bordwell et al., 1930, p. 163).

The Bureau of Personnel Research wanted to discover the real factors underlying the present dissatisfaction with marriage and to determine the social elements which were so profoundly affecting the American family. To achieve this goal, it requested students to answer the questions and drop the leaflet in a university mailbox. The investigation was statistical rather than personal and therefore they were told not to give their name or any other indication or their identity.

The letter was followed by eleven groups of questions with sufficient space provided for answers where warranted, as shown

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. (a). If you were engaged to marry a young woman and suddenly learned that she had at some time indulged in illicit sexual relations, would you break the engagement?..... (b). Would you break the engagement if you learned that she had so indulged often and indiscriminately?..... (c). Would you break the engagement if you learned that she had accepted money in return for her sexual favors?..... (d). And if, after marriage, you were to find that your wife was sexually unfaithful to you, would you terminate your relations with her?.....

2. (a). Would you quit associating with an unmarried man on learning that he had at some time engaged in sexual irregularities?..... (b). On learning that he had so engaged often and promiscuously?..... (c). Would you quit associating with a married man on learning that he engaged in extra-marital sexual activities?.....

3. (a). Are your own relations with women restrained most by religious convictions, fear of social disapproval, physical repugnance, fear of producing pregnancy, lack of opportunity, fear of venereal diseases, pride in your own ability to resist temptation, or by respect for womanly virtue?..... (b). During your childhood, did you ever engage in mutual sexual play with another individual?..... (c). Since sexual maturity, have you ever engaged in specific sexual relations?.....

4. (a). Do you intend ever to marry?..... (b). If so, preferably at what age?..... (c). How old are you now?..... (d). With reference to your own age, how old do you prefer that your wife be?.....

5. (a). Would you favor the establishment of a legal system of "trial" marriage wherein a man and a woman would be not only privileged but expected to live in sexual intimacy for some days or weeks prior to their definite marriage, in order to determine whether or not they are sexually compatible?..... (b). Would you favor the establishment of a legal system of "companionate" marriage which would require for its dissolution merely a public announcement made by mutual agreement of the parties without any appeal to the courts?.....

6. (a). Do you believe in easy divorce?..... (b). In case of divorce, do you think it is just that a man should pay alimony: (i) For the support of his children?..... (ii) To enable his ex-wife to continue living at a standard as good as his?..... (iii) To compensate her for any setback in her professional career which she may have sustained as the result of her marriage?..... (iv) To compensate her for the social injury and humiliation she may have suffered?..... (c). If she is financially able, is it reasonable that a divorced wife should sometimes be made to pay her husband alimony?..... (d). In selecting a wife would you be influenced more by her personal attributes or by her financial resources?.....

Figure 5: Questionnaire, Male Version. University Archives. University of Missouri. Columbia. Collection UW: 1/0/1.

in figure 5. The most shocking to the public were the three in the beginning that Mowrer intended to use in his future master thesis, especially those addressed to the young coeds.

The first question had to do with illicit sexual relations and in the female version presented the following three sub-questions:

a) If you were engaged to marry a man and suddenly learned that he had at some time indulged in illicit sexual relations, would you break the engagement?

b) Would you break the engagement if you learned that he had so indulged frequently and indiscriminately?

c) *And if, after marriage you were to find that your husband was sexually unfaithful to you, would you terminate your relations with him?* (Bordwell et al., 1930, p.164).

The male version, however, added question c) from figure 5: “*Would you break the engagement if you learned that she had accepted money in return for her sexual favors?*” The issue of male prostitution was not on the female version because it was beginning to emerge at that time and the authors of the questionnaire probably ignored it.

The second question investigated students’ attitude about “illicit” sex of their same-sex friends and sought to determine whether they would disassociate with them after knowing that they had engaged in illicit sexual relations. In this case, the female version had an extra item regarding the money received for sexual favors, something that was lacking in the male version. So, the coeds were asked:

- (a) *Would you quit associating with an unmarried woman on learning that she had at some time engaged in sexual irregularities?*
- (b) *On learning that she had so engaged often and promiscuously?*
- (c) *On learning that she had accepted money in return for her sexual favors?*
- (d) *Would you quit associating with a married woman on learning that she engaged in extra-marital sexual activities?* (Bordwell et al.,1930, p. 164).

As shown in figure 5, the parallel male version only presented three items.

Then came the third question about sexual experiences outside of marriage that provoked strong reactions in the press. The female version read:

- (a) *Are your own relations with men restrained most by religious convictions, fear of social disapproval, physical repugnance, fear of pregnancy, lack of opportunity, fear of venereal diseases, or pride in your own ability to resist temptation?*
- (b) *During your childhood, did you ever engage in mutual sexual play with another individual?*
- (c) *Since sexual maturity, have you ever engaged in specific sexual relations?* (Bordwell et al. ,1930, pp. 164-165)

The male version included “*respect to womanly virtue*” among the factors restraining sex with women, as shown in figure 5. The fact that this item is missing in the female form seems to imply that men were less virtuous than women on this issue and consequently enjoyed greater sexual freedom, which would indicate the Victorian emphasis on female purity and could be interpreted as a kind of machismo in the authors of the questionnaire.

Question four about intention to marry was more neutral than the fifth regarding trial marriage and companionate marriage, which were a source of concern among the traditionalists of the 1920s. Being the same for men and women, question five entailed the following sub-questions shown in figure 5:

- (a) *Would you favor the establishment of a legal system of “trial” marriage wherein a man and a woman would be not only privileged but expected to live in sexual intimacy for some days or weeks prior to their definite marriage to determine whether or*

not they were sexually compatible?

- (b) *Would you favor the establishment of a legal system of “companionate” marriage, which would require for its dissolution merely a public announcement made by mutual agreement of the parties without any appeal to the courts?*

Companionate marriage had been championed by Benjamin B. Lindsey (1869-1943), a high-profile progressive and controversial Colorado judge who published *The Companionate Marriage* (1927), which he defined in the preface as “legal marriage, with legalized Birth Control, and with the right to divorce by mutual consent for childless couples, usually without payment of alimony” (Lindsay & Evans, 1927, p. v).

According to Lindsey, companionate marriage was already an established social fact in America among the most sophisticated people, but it was necessary to extend it to all social classes. It was a marriage distinct from trial marriage, despite both sharing common features like birth control and divorce by mutual consent, because it implied a different attitude in the married couple. Men and women entering in companionate marriage knew that there was a possibility of failure ahead, but they were decided to overcome difficulties, something that people entering trial marriage were lacking, since they put more emphasis on risks than on the will to solve problems.

Professor DeGraff was a conservative who was opposed to trial and companionate marriage, but he dealt with them in his course on the family because he thought that students should have information from a reliable source rather than from the tabloid magazines that were covering the topic in detail and emphasizing the high rate of divorce in American Society.

Question six asked students if they believed in easy divorce and included several questions about alimony, ending up with a question about whether their choice of partner would be made by reasons of economic position or because of their personal attributes. There were no significant differences between the two versions of the questionnaire.

After question seven, which dealt with personal data, question eight asked about how many children they wanted to have in their family and if they were in favor of birth-control.

Question nine dealt with a married woman’s economic dependence or independence and her intention to pursue a vocation aside from housekeeping. It had two sub-questions, which in the female version were:

- (a) *If you do marry, do you intend to be*
 - (i) *economically independent of your husband?*
 - (ii) *Partially independent?*
 - (iii) *Entirely dependent upon him for support? (Check one answer)*
- (b) *If you intend to follow some other vocation after marriage than housekeeping, what is it?* (Bordwell et al. ,1930, p.166)

Question a) was practically the same in the male version, since it asked if he intended that his wife should be economically independent of him. Question b), however, referred to the man’s own vocation or profession rather than that of the woman.

The next one dealt with equality of intelligence between men and women and asked if women were physically able to compete with men in the world of business despite their monthly cycle. Coeds had to answer the following questions:

(a) *Do you think men are superior, equal, or inferior to women in natural intelligence?*

(b) *Granting intellectual equality, do you think women are strong enough physically to compete effectively with men in the business world?*

(c) *Do you feel that the period of menstruation would be a serious handicap to you:*

(i) *In professional life?*

(ii) *In business life?*

(iii) *In industrial life? (Bordwell et al., 1930, p.166)*

Naturally, the question about menstruation was only for women, so in the men's version was replaced by "Are you opposed to women entering the business and professional world?" (Mowrer (sex) Questionnaire (1929), n. p).

The last question asked whether they would favor sharing expenses equally on "dates" and was identical in both versions, namely:

(a) *As a college student would you favor a system in which men and women share equally in the expense of "dates"?*

(b) *If such a system were in vogue, would you consider it as proper for a woman to ask a man for his company as for a man to ask a woman?" (Bordwell et al., 1930, p. 166)*

It is rather surprising that such naïve questions as the ones in this questionnaire warranted the disapproval of Missourian society and the reprobation of an executive board of curators made up of a country editor and two lawyers, but the fact is that they provoked the dismissal of two professors young Mowrer greatly appreciated and admired.

Mowrer's Response

As soon as he learned about the decision of the executive board of curators, Mowrer decided to drop out of the University of Missouri even though he had not been expelled. In the University of Illinois Archives there is a non-dated copy of the public statement he made when he found out about the dismissal of Professors Meyer and DeGraff, in which he announced his refusal to continue in college. As he wrote:

I am surprised to learn that my connection with the University as a student was not also severed. But I shall relieve the University Administration of that task; this afternoon I shall formally petition to withdraw from this institution. I have no desire to graduate from any university which does not respect the principles of freedom of speech, freedom of thought, and freedom in the pursuit of the truth wherever or however it may be sought, and which is dependent for its support upon a legislature such as is now convened in Jefferson City (Mowrer, 1929, n.d. p.1).

After announcing his intention to write a series of articles on the practical and theoretical implications of his research and a general

consideration of the sexual morality among college students, Mowrer continued:

It seems to me that the recent decision was almost unavoidable. The "righteously indignant" part of the public had demanded blood; either the University Administration or some of the rest of us had to bleed...

Now that the local sensational newspaper and aspiring politicians have had their annual fling at the University, I trust they will be content to confine their attention, at least for another year or so, to their customarily inconsequential routine of affairs, and that the public will survive the dreadful shock its modesty has suffered (Mowrer, 1929, n.d., p.2)

In April 1929, Mowrer wrote to Knight Dunlap asking for his help to begin graduate work at Johns Hopkins University without a bachelor's degree. He was admitted and two years later, in 1931, the University of Missouri granted him full credit for the courses he was taking when he left college and awarded him an A.B. degree as of the later date.

In early June 1929, Mowrer enrolled in the summer courses at Johns Hopkins but a few days after arriving in Baltimore he broke down into a severe state of panic and depression that required hospitalization. That was the first of a series of psychiatric internments.

Born in a rural milieu and brought up in a rigid and conservative family, young Mowrer enjoyed the Jazz Age's freedom and met scientific positivism at college, with the consequent weakening of his religious faith. According to Mowrer, "One course in psychology, one in biology, and a rhetoric class with a brilliant young atheist from one of the eastern universities were enough to shatter my already frail faith in conventional Christianity and to convince me that science was the only real hope for the future" (Mowrer, 1966, p. 9).

Mowrer's hope in the new world of science began to be shattered when his sex questionnaire incited the rejection of a large part of Missourian society and the punishment of Max Meyer; this shock could have been a major factor in his Baltimore depression, even though he was not fully aware of it. In one of his autobiographical writings, he wrote:

I was not consciously bothered by the events of the preceding weeks, but instead felt zest and excitement over the prospect of starting graduate school. However, a week or so after my arrival... One night I studied as usual, but upon going to bed, instead of relaxing and dropping off to sleep I felt tense; the tension presently turned into a small wave of fear, then a larger one, then one larger still, and in the course of a few seconds I was in a state of near panic – and had passed from apparent normality into a serious "agitated depression" (Mowrer, 1966, p. 13).

After consulting a reputable Baltimore physician, Mowrer was admitted to the Baltimore Memorial Hospital for treatment which involved complete bedrest for a couple of weeks and some sedation. Later, he attributed this depression to the change of environment instead of the traumatic events experienced in Columbia: "This move had meant leaving old friends, a familiar environment, and a young woman to whom I was engaged, and entering a totally new and strange situation." (Mowrer, 1974, p. 346).

The scandal of the sex questionnaire was not among the factors that Mowrer mentioned as contributing to the recurring series of psychotic depressions he suffered for the rest of his days. He pointed out a genetic predisposition to depression, the death of his father, his personal ambition, the inhibition of the free expression of his own emotions by his father, the loss of important privileges following his father's death and, finally, the guilty secrets with which he did not know how to deal adequately (Mowrer, 1974, p. 345). The feelings of guilt for having caused the dismissal of two prominent university professors were not among these guilty secrets, but they very likely played an important role in his first episode of depression in Baltimore.

After being discharged from the hospital, Mowrer tried psychoanalysis and discovered guilty secrets pertaining to sexuality, which were rejected by his analyst. He then left psychoanalysis for some time and moved to New York hoping to get a job on a tourist boat that allowed him to travel the world. But the Great Depression of 1929 brought a significant decline in tourism so, after a brief stay in the Big Apple, he returned to Baltimore to complete his studies at Johns Hopkins University under the tutelage of Knight Dunlap.

Conclusion

O. Hobart Mowrer's subsequent career in the fields of psychoanalysis, learning psychology and group psychotherapy should not be separated from this early episode, which probably left a mark on his fragile personality. But leaving aside this negative impact, how is it possible that professors Meyer and DeGraff did not foresee the strong reaction against the questionnaire and authorized its circulation?

They probably did not expect such opposition from Victorian society to the progressive morality that was beginning to take hold in academia (Coben, 1991). The University of Missouri alumni and the censors of the questionnaire felt that the University should protect and defend the old moral values, but the generation that came of age after World War I had quite a different view, especially regarding married life. The rising divorce rates seemed to validate the view that family life was falling apart, as the founder of behaviorism, John B. Watson (1878-1958), pointed out in his campaign against traditional marriage after the divorce scandal that forced him to leave Johns Hopkins University in 1920 (Gondra, 2014).

Around the same time as the sex questionnaire, Dr. G. V. Hamilton and Kenneth Macgowan published *What is Wrong with Marriage* (1929) with an introduction by John B. Watson saying that it was "the best approach and the most objective approach we have so far to the study of marriage" (Watson, 1929, xiv).

Hamilton and Macgowan took a group of one hundred men and one hundred women, all of them married but not necessarily to each other and asked them four hundred questions about their marital life. Their major finding was that thirty-six percent of men and forty-one percent of women had hopeless marriages and only twenty-nine men and twenty-one women were successfully married. The rest of them were successfully married but with qualifications.

The following year saw the publication of *The New Generation: The intimate problems of modern parents and children*, a book edited by a

radical left-wing writer with an introduction by Bertrand Russell and the collaboration of prominent names in psychology and social science, including John B. Watson, Havelock Ellis, Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead, Wilhelm Stekel, Lewis Terman and Fritz Wittels (Calverton & Henderson, 1930). The chapter by Terman was entitled "Talent and Genius in Children" and did not deal with sexuality as did his 1938 book cited above. In the 1920s sexuality research was in the domain of sociology rather than psychology, which focused on the investigation of sex differences (Morawski, 1985)

In the chapter about the family, John B. Watson considered home as an obsolete institution and stated that younger generations were beginning to experiment in sex on a scale which would terrify their parents if they knew it. This bloodless revolt was leading inevitably, he wrote, "to the early abandonment of the home in everything but in name" (Watson, 1930, p. 68).

These criticisms of traditional marriage and the new forms of entertainment such as motion pictures, radio broadcasts, magazines, and advertising manifested a growing public interest in sexuality with the subsequent change in sexual mores. The conclusion of the World War I ushered in a new generation of young men and women ready to break free from the old Victorian sexual morality with which they were raised and O. H. Mowrer intended to study these changes with the questionnaire method.

A host of adverse circumstances, such as the University of Missouri problems with the legislature over appropriations, a president beset by social pressure from alumni, the local press, businessman and politicians, along with Victorian society's opposition to the study of sexuality, contributed to the apparent failure of Mowrer's first serious project of scientific research. The two hundred questionnaires already completed by the students were thrown into the fire instead of being analyzed and published by Mowrer in a sociology class paper; thus, psychology lost a source of reliable data on the sexuality of young people in the late 1920s. Moreover, this failure probably triggered the onset of Mowrer's progressive estrangement from a psychological science that was not able to solve his personal problems.

But neither can it be said that the episode had a totally negative outcome for either Mowrer or the scientific community. It made Mowrer a pioneer in using the questionnaire method for psychology research on sexuality, and the scandal gave him experience in dealing with the press. Moreover, in Baltimore Dunlap introduced him to scientific research, and the depression he suffered led him to psychoanalysis; his long psychoanalytic treatments gave him a knowledge of psychoanalysis which he would later use to advantage at the Yale Institute of Human Relations.

Regarding the consequences of the scandal for the scientific community, the huge social impact brought about the press mobilized the academy to defend freedom in teaching and research.

The American Association of University Professors acted immediately after learning of the dismissal of Professors Meyer and DeGraff and sent to Columbia a committee chaired by Anton J. Carlson (1875-1956), an outstanding physiologist from the University of Chicago, and consisting of other three members, including Leon Thurstone (1887-1955), a psychologist who specialized in the study of intelligence and developed a technique multiple-factor analysis. After interviewing everyone who had been involved in the scandal, on

January 10, 1930, the committee released to the press a report on the academic freedom at the University of Missouri that was commented on in nearly every major American newspaper, including the *New York Times*.

The thirty-four-page report of the AAUP began by refuting the main formal accusations of the Board of Curators against the questionnaire. In the evidence section the report concluded that there was nothing morally reprehensible about the conduct of those responsible for the questionnaire and there was little or no evidence that the students were shocked or scandalized by the questionnaire, which did however shock the older generation, including President Brooks. Moreover, it was evident that the students were familiar with the sex matters included in the questionnaire, and therefore it could not be argued that their moral life would in any way be harmed or injured.

To the objection that the questionnaire could not produce any scientifically valid conclusions, the report replied that the Board of Curators was not at all competent to pronounce upon the scientific value of an investigation and the questionnaire method was a legitimate method for studying objectively social institutions, such as marriage and family, which rested largely on a sexual code.

The report also pointed out that it was clearly a misconception to say that the questionnaire aimed to correct moral conditions among the students, because the first aim of scientific research was not to correct anything but to establish objective facts.

The report dedicated many pages to the suspension of Professor Meyer and the dismissal of Professor DeGraff, which was in blatant contradiction to the principle of freedom of teaching and research, as well as that of security of tenure in the university, and very harshly criticized President Brooks for failing to adequately defend the faculty and using terms such as “damn fool ideas,” or “sewer sociology” in describing the questionnaire to the press instead of explaining its purpose and scientific aims (Bordwell et al., 1930, p. 153).

In the final summary the AAUP committee recognized that the university administration should have been informed before the circulation of the questionnaire and that the wording of the preamble and questions might have been softened to avoid scandalizing citizens of the passing generation. However, since conflict between science and traditional taboos was inevitable, instructors in the university had the right to expect clear leadership from their administration in defense of the freedom of teaching and research, in addition to fairness and truth in explaining the criticized work to the public. President Brooks and the Board failed entirely in their duty on the questionnaire issue.

The report concluded by saying that the Board's action in this episode and the University statutes that allowed dismissal without pay of any professor at any time:

render the present situation in the University of Missouri in the matter of freedom in research and teaching and security of tenure, sufficiently grave to engage the serious attention of university men in general and of national organizations of investigators and educators in particular. Under the present administration the University of Missouri is not an institution where scholars may go and work with the assurance of the freedom in teaching and research, and security of tenure granted in the ranking universities of this country (Bordwell et al., p.163).

The newspapers across the country reported this AAUP document denouncing the University of Missouri administration, and the Curators immediately sent a statement to the press defending their action. But public opinion was clearly against them and they had no choice but to dismiss President Brooks. On March 30, 1930, the *New York Times* announced the possible resignation of President Brooks, and a week later he was fired at the Board meeting on April 5. In its resolution, the Board claimed the sex questionnaire played no role in the ouster, but in fact Mower's research project gave rise to the process that ended with the expulsion of President Brooks.

This fact was important not only to the University of Missouri but across the American university system because, as Stanley Coben wrote, “during the mid and late nineteenth century, trustees of colleges and universities in the United States almost invariably selected as presidents men who shared the trustees' piety and orthodox political, social, moral and religious beliefs” (Coben, 1991, p. 37). By precipitating the ousting of a university president of the older generation Mower contributed indirectly to the renewal of the American university System. For this fact and for those stated above, I believe that the “sex sexual scandal” episode deserves a place in the history of psychology.

References

- Birkhead, L. M. (1929). *Missouri University sex questionnaire and its significance*. Haldeman-Julius.
- Blakeslee, H. W. (1938, September 9). American home turns out fascists, says professor. *Oakland Tribune*, p. 9.
- Bordwell, P., Gray, J., Thurstone, L., & Carlson, A. (1930). Academic freedom at the University of Missouri: Report on the dismissal of Professor DeGraff and the suspension of Professor Meyer. *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors (1915-1955)*, 16 (2), 143-176. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40218216>
- Calverton, V. S. & Schmalhausen, S. D. (Eds.) (1930). *The new generation: The intimate problems of modern parents and children*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Campus astir as Brooks probes a questionnaire. (1929, March 14). *Jefferson City Post-Tribune*, p. 1.
- Christensen, H. T. (1960). Cultural relativism and premarital sex norms. *American Sociological Review*, 25 (1), 31-39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2088945>
- Christensen, H. T. & Carpenter, G. R. (1962). Value-behavior discrepancies regarding premarital coitus in three western cultures. *American Sociological Review*, 27 (1), 66-74. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2089719>
- Coben, S. (1991). *Rebellion against Victorianism: The impetus for cultural change in 1920s America*. Oxford University Press.
- Dismissed for Sex Questionnaire. (1929, March 21). *The Sedalia Democrat*, p.3.
- Dollard, J., Miller, N. E., Doob, L. W., Mowrer, O. H. & Sears, R. R. (1939). *Frustration and aggression*. Yale University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10022-000>
- Dumenil, L. (1995). *The modern temper: American culture and society in the 1920s*. Hill and Wang.
- Dunlap, K. (1925). *Social psychology*. Williams and Wilkins Company.
- Dunlap, K. & Mowrer, O. H. (1930). Head movements and eye functions on birds. *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, 11 (1), 99-113. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0075905>
- Ellis, A. (1960). Mowrer on “sin.” *American Psychologist*, 15 (11), 713-714. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0038858>
- Esper, E. A. (1966). Max Meyer: The Making of a Scientific Isolate. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*. 2(4): 341-356. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696\(196610\)2:4%3C341::AID-JHBS2300020408%3E3.0.CO;2-D](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696(196610)2:4%3C341::AID-JHBS2300020408%3E3.0.CO;2-D)

- Esper, E. A. (1967). Max Meyer in America. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 3 (2), 107-131. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696\(196704\)3:2%3C107::AID-JHBS2300030202%3E3.0.CO;2-F](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696(196704)3:2%3C107::AID-JHBS2300030202%3E3.0.CO;2-F)
- Fire puts end to questionnaire (1929, April 9). *Jefferson City Post-Tribune*, p. 1.
- Fleming, D. L. (1929, March 23). School "sex questionnaire" rocks state of Missouri. *Baltimore Sun*, pp. 1.9.
- Fleming, D. L. (1929, March 26). Victim of "sex-canvas" row is world-famous professor. *Baltimore Sun*, pp.1.7.
- Gondra, J. M. (2014). Behaviorist, publicist, and social critique: The evolution of John B. Watson. *Revista de Historia de la Psicología*, 35 (1), 13-36.
- Gondra, J. M. (2019). Los grupos de integridad de O. Hobart Mowrer: Honestidad, responsabilidad y comunidad (O. Hobart Mowrer's integrity groups: Honesty, responsibility and community). *Revista de Historia de la Psicología*, 40 (1), 12-26. <https://doi.org/10.5093/rhp2019a2>
- Haggbloom, S. J.; Warnick, R.; Warnick, J. E.; Jones, V. K.; Yarbrough, G. L.; Russell, T. M.; Borecky, C. M.; McGahhey, R. et al. (2002). The 100 most eminent psychologists of the 20th century. *Review of General Psychology*, 6 (2), 139-152. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.6.2.139>
- Hamilton, G. V. & Macgowan, K. (1929). *What is wrong with marriage*. Albert and Charles Boni.
- Hull, C. L. (1943). *Principles of behavior*. D. Appleton-Century Company.
- Lemov, R. M. (2005). *World as laboratory: Experiments with mice, mazes, and men*. Macmillan.
- Lindsey, B. & Evans, W. (1927). *The companionate marriage*. Brentano's.
- Meyer, M. F. (1911). *The fundamental laws of human behavior*. Badger.
- Meyer, M. F. (1921). *Psychology of the Other-One*. Missouri Book Co.
- Missouri U. Curators called to investigate the sex questionnaire (1929, March 15). *The Jefferson City Post-Tribune*, p. 1.
- Morawski, J. G. (1985). The measurement of masculinity and femininity: Engendering categorial realities. *Journal of Personality*, 53 (2), 196-223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1985.tb00364.x>
- Mowrer, O. H. (1929, n. d). On the decision of the Executive Board of the Curators of the University of Missouri concerning the recent so called "sex questionnaire scandal". O. Hobart Mowrer Papers, Box 2: University of Missouri: sex questionnaire controversy. University of Illinois Archives, Urbana, IL
- Mowrer, O. H. (1934). The modification of vestibular nystagmus by means of repeated elicitation. *Comparative Psychology Monograph*, 9 (45), 1-48.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1935). The nystagmic response of the pigeon to constant angular acceleration at liminal and supraliminal intensities. *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, 19 (1), 177-193. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0059906>
- Mowrer, O. H. (1938). Authoritarianism vs. "self-government" in the management of children's aggressive (anti-social) reactions as preparation for citizenship in a Democracy. *Psychological Bulletin*, 35 (9), 660.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1939a) Authoritarianism vs. "self-government" in the management of children's aggressive (anti-social) reactions as preparation for citizenship in a Democracy. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 10 (1), 121-126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1939.9713350>
- Mowrer, O. H. (1939b). A Stimulus-response analysis of anxiety and its role as a reinforcing agent. *Psychological Review*, 46 (6), 553-565. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054288>
- Mowrer, O. H. (1940a). Anxiety-reduction and learning. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 27 (5), 497-516. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0056236>
- Mowrer, O. H. (1940b). An experimental analogue of "regression" with incidental observations on "reaction-formation." *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 35 (1), 56-87. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0063665>
- Mowrer, O. H. (1947). On the dual nature of learning - a reinterpretation of "conditioning" and "problem-solving." *Harvard Educational Review*, 17, 102-148.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1950). *Learning theory and personality dynamics*. Ronald Press.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1951). Two-factor learning theory: summary and comment. *Psychological Review*, 58 (5), 350-354. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0058956>
- Mowrer, O. H. (1960a). *Learning theory and behavior*. Wiley.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1960b). "Sin" the lesser of two evils. *American Psychologist*, 15 (5), 301-304. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045069>
- Mowrer, O. H. (1961). *The crisis in psychiatry and religion*. Van Nostrand.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1964). *The new group therapy*. Van Nostrand.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1966). Abnormal reactions of actions? (An autobiographical answer). In J. A. Vernon (Ed.), *Introduction to psychology: A self-selection textbook*. William C. Brown.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1967). *Morality and mental health*. Rand McNally
- Mowrer, O. H. (1968). New evidence concerning the nature of psychopathology. In M. Feldman (Ed.), *Studies in psychotherapy and behavior change* (113-158). University of Buffalo Press.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1972). Integrity groups: principles and procedures. *Counseling Psychologist*, 3 (2), 7-33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000072003002033>
- Mowrer, O. H. (1974). O. Hobart Mowrer. In G. Lindzey (Ed.), *A history of psychology in autobiography* (vol. VI: 329-364). Prentice - Hall.
- Mowrer, O. H. & Jones, H. M. (1943). Extinction and behavior variability as functions of effortfulness of task. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 33 (5), 369-386. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0056182>
- Mowrer, O. H. & Lamoreaux, R. R. (1946). Fear as an intervening variable in avoidance conditioning. *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, 39 (1), 29-50. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0060150>
- Mowrer, O. H. & Ullman, A. D. (1945). Time as a determinant in integrative learning. *Psychological Review*, 52 (2), 61-90. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0057071>
- Mowrer (Sex) Questionnaire (1929). University Archives. University of Missouri. Collection UW:1/0/1. Box 4.
- Nelson, L. J. (2003). *Rumors of indiscretion: The University of Missouri "sex questionnaire" scandal in the Jazz Age*. Missouri University Press.
- Page, C. (2017). Preserving guilt in the "age of psychology:" The curious career of O. Hobart Mowrer. *History of Psychology*, 20 (1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1037/hop0000045>
- Questionnaire on sex seized at Missouri U. (1929, March 14). *The Saint Louis Star and Times*, p.1.
- Rosas, J. M. (2021). The magic mirror of Rescorla's methodological behaviorism. *Revista de Historia de la Psicología*, 42 (1), 28-35. <https://doi.org/10.5093/rhp2021a5>
- Says children are fascists (1938, Sept 9). *The Evening Republican*, Columbus, Indiana, p. 5.
- Stephens, F. F. (1962). *A history of the University of Missouri*. University of Missouri Press.
- Terman, L. M. (1938). *Psychological factors in marital happiness*. McGraw- Hill.
- Tolman, E. C. (1933). Sign-Gestalt or conditioned reflex? *Psychological Review*, 40 (3), 246-255. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0071472>
- Tolman, E. C. (1948). Cognitive maps in rats and men. *Psychological Review*, 55 (4), 189-208. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0061626>
- Tone, F. (1939, January 14). Don't Raise "Nursery Nazis". *The Burlington (N.C.) Daily Times-News*, p. 4.
- University Board will probe quiz (1929, March 16). *Joplin Globe*, p.1.
- Watson, J. B. (1913). Psychology as the behaviorist views it. *Psychological Review*, 20, 158-177. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0074428>
- Watson, J. B. (1929). Introduction. In G. V. Hamilton & K. Macgowan (Eds.), *What is wrong with marriage* (pp. xiii-xxi). Albert and Charles Boni.
- Watson, J. B. (1930). After the family - What? In V.F. Calverton & S. D. Schmalhausen (Eds.), *The new generation: The intimate problems of modern parents and children* (pp. 55-73). Allen and Unwin.