


Meritocracy 2.0: High-Stakes, Standardized Testing as a Racial Project of Neoliberal Multiculturalism

Educational Policy
2016, Vol. 30(1) 39–62
© The Author(s) 2015
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0895904815614916
epx.sagepub.com


Wayne Au¹

Abstract

High-stakes, standardized testing is regularly used within in accountability narratives as a tool for achieving racial equality in schools. Using the frameworks of “racial projects” and “neoliberal multiculturalism,” and drawing on historical and empirical research, this article argues that not only does high-stakes, standardized testing serve to further racial inequality in education, it does so under the guise of forms of anti-racism that have been reconstituted as part of a larger neoliberal project for education reform. This mix of neoliberalism, high-stakes testing, and official anti-racisms that are used to deny structural, racialized inequalities are a manifestation of what the author calls, “Meritocracy 2.0.”

Keywords

education reform, standardized testing, high-stakes accountability, urban schools, politics of education, social justice

Introduction

Over the last several decades, the United States has experienced a conservative modernization (Apple, 2006) that in part has manifested in a broad project

¹University of Washington Bothell, WA, USA

Corresponding Author:

Wayne Au, University of Washington Bothell, Box 358531, 18115 Campus Way NE, Bothell, WA 98011, USA.

Email: wayneau@uw.edu

of reshaping public education along the lines of free-market capitalism. This project has been advanced through a bevy of policy initiatives: an increase in school choice and school voucher programs (Apple & Pedroni, 2005; Ravitch, 2010), the deregulation of teacher education (Kretchmar, Sondel, & Ferrare, 2014; Zeichner & Pena-Sandoval, 2015), a decrease in democratic oversight of public schools (Au & Ferrare, 2014; Ravitch, 2013; Scott & Jabbar, 2014; Stovall, 2015), and the contracting of public school services out to private industry (Burch, 2006, 2009), among other market-oriented, neoliberal policies and structures (Fabricant & Fine, 2013; Saltman, 2012). Within this milieu of free-market, neoliberal education policies, high-stakes, standardized tests have emerged as perhaps the most crucial piece underlying these reform efforts. The high-stakes, standardized tests provide the data on which student, teacher, and school value are measured, establish the basis for viewing education as a market where consumers can make choices about where to send their children to school (Au, 2009b), afford a framework for the construction of an achievement gap that organizes racial discourse and contributes to the racial imaginary (Leonardo, 2011), and offer a basic paradigm for public education to be reformed through profit-making interventions (Apple, 2006; Fabricant & Fine, 2013).

Furthermore, it is critical to understand that, in direct discursive response to the legacies of entrenched racism of public institutions in the United States generally and in U.S. schools specifically (Ladson-Billings, 2006), current neoliberal-imbued education reform efforts are often constructed around narratives of racial equality (see Scott, 2013), including the use of high-stakes, standardized testing (Heubert, 2001; Madaus & Clarke, 2001). In this article, I frame high-stakes, standardized testing as a racial project and consider the ways it has consistently reproduced racial inequality in the United States. I further argue that, given their presumed objectivity, such standardized testing fundamentally masks the structural nature of racial inequality within an ideology of individual meritocracy, an ideology that advances a racialized neoliberal project that reconstitutes “anti-racism” as being against the very act of naming race itself. That is to say, as I argue here, the neoliberal project has reconstructed “anti-racist” as being against any identification around race (and any itinerant signification) in favor of a post-racial identification constructed around freely acting and competing individuals. This interplay of neoliberalism, the reconstitution of “anti-racism” in ways that deny the structural and material realities of racism, and high-stakes testing coalesce in what I name here as “Meritocracy 2.0.”

I begin this article with a discussion of the conceptual frames that guide the present analysis, specifically neoliberalism, racial projects, and neoliberal multiculturalism. I then go on to consider standardized testing as a racial

project in the United States historically, specifically addressing the ways that the ideology of meritocracy operates as the root justification for structural educational inequality. Subsequently I take up an analysis of high-stakes, standardized testing as a racial project in modern day education policy, attending specifically to the ways that it empirically increases racism in education while ideologically denying structural inequalities, vis-à-vis neoliberal forms of meritocracy and anti-racism. I conclude this article with a discussion of the implications of my analysis for civil rights discourses surrounding the use of high-stakes testing to achieve racial equality in the United States, arguing that high-stakes testing cannot dismantle racial inequality because it fundamentally and materially advances the project of increasing racialized injustice.

Conceptual Framework

My analysis in this article broadly falls under the banner of critical policy analysis (Taylor, 1997) in the spirit of critical educational theory and practice (Apple & Au, 2009), because I focus on the interplay between structures of power and ideology and how they manifest within the advancement of particular education policies. More specifically I draw on a handful of concepts that provide the framework for understanding the relationship between high-stakes, standardized testing and racial inequality. The first concept is that of neoliberalism. Although there are competing definitions and conceptions of neoliberalism, for the purposes of my analysis I draw on the work of Harvey (2007), who explains that neoliberalism is a combination of political and economic theories and practices built on the assumption that “human well-being can be best advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade” (p. 22). As such, neoliberalism seeks to attack the public sphere because the neoliberal human ideal resides in the deregulated private sphere, under the assumption that individual capitalist competition is both more efficient and more effective than anything done more collectively through the public (Lipman, 2011). Within education policy and the structure of schooling, neoliberalism can take many forms, most of which revolve around the creation of quasi-markets built on notions of school choice, the deregulation of the teaching profession, a shift away from democratic governance, competition for resources and production of educational outputs (e.g., high test scores), and providing profit-making corporations with access to resources devoted to public education (Apple, 2006; Au & Ferrare, 2015; Fabricant & Fine, 2013; Lipman, 2011). High-stakes testing generally appeals to the neoliberal educational project because

the data produced by the tests can then be used as the metrics for competition in the educational marketplace (Apple, 2006). Within these marketplace logics, “good” teachers and schools produce high test scores in students, “bad” teachers and schools produce low test scores in students, parents can use the data to then make choices about where to send their children (a.k.a. where the investment of their public monies should go), “bad” teachers can receive low evaluations and be fired, “bad” schools with low test scores will lose market share and be closed, and “good” schools with high test scores will remain open and be successful. Simply put, the tests allow education to be reconstructed around a simple model of commodity production and consumption (Au, 2009b).

However, my intent here is not to just think through high-stakes, standardized testing as a tool of market-oriented reforms. Rather, it is critical that we understand that capitalism and the neoliberal project has always been signified, operationalized, and instantiated through the racialization of economic class (Leonardo, 2012), and that standardized testing has played a direct role in constructing his race-class nexus within education. As such, for my analysis here I also draw on what Melamed (2011) refers to as *neoliberal multiculturalism*, which she explains

. . . has disguised the reality that neoliberalism remains a form of racial capitalism. . . . Race has continued to permeate capitalism’s economic and social processes, organizing the hyper extraction of surplus value from racialized bodies and naturalizing a system of capital accumulation. . . . Yet multiculturalism has portrayed neoliberal policy as the key to a poststracist world of freedom and opportunity. (p. 42)

Within the framing of neoliberal multiculturalism, the empirical question becomes whether or not high-stakes, standardized testing, as the fulcrum on which free-market education policy mechanisms pivot, ameliorates educational inequality experienced by children of color in the United States, or exacerbates racialized inequalities. Thus, it also becomes important to understand education policy generally, and high-stakes, standardized testing specifically, as structures and tools that further a particular “racial project” (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 125) of neoliberal multiculturalism, because such testing structures our meaning making of racialized inequality in education in particular ways. As a racial project, high-stakes, standardized testing constructs which children (and communities) are identified as “failures” by the tests, how such “failure” is used to justify neoliberal conceptions of individualist educational attainment and the denial of structural inequalities (Meritocracy 2.0), and, subsequently, what policies and practices are to be enacted on those

children and communities identified by the tests as “failures.” Furthermore, to understand high-stakes, standardized testing as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism means that we also must consider the constructions of racialized inequality embedded in the material histories of such testing as well.

Finally, in addition to understanding high-stakes, standardized testing within the framework of neoliberal multiculturalism (Melamed, 2011) and as a racial project (Omi & Winant, 2015), I return to Melamed (2011) because such testing is thus also as an expression of “official anti-racism” by the state apparatus. As she explains,

Tropes such as race reform, racial progress, racial integration, ending racism, bringing in excluded voices, and living in a postracial society have become the touchstones for racial projects that recalibrate state apparatuses, expand the reach of normative power, and implant norms during the performative constitution of human subjectivities. By controlling what counts as a race matter, an antiracist goal, or a truism about racial difference, official antiracisms have structured legitimate knowledges in the domain of law, public policy, economy, and culture. (p. 11, emphasis in original)

As I will argue later, high-stakes, standardized testing is used by the state not only to racialize our understanding of structural inequalities, but also to control “what counts as a race matter,” thereby shifting racial discourse in educational policy.

In what follows, I outline the history of standardized testing (the progenitor of high-stakes, standardized testing) as a racial project. I then address how this testing was used to justify an ideology of meritocracy, built on the presumed objective measurement of human intelligence. From there, I move on to consider modern-day high-stakes, standardized testing as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism, including how civil rights discourse is attached to the tests, despite the empirical evidence of the deleterious effects of such testing on children of color specifically. I conclude by discussing the intractable contradiction posed by attempting to use high-stakes, standardized tests as a tool for ending racial inequality in education.

A History of Standardized Testing as a Racial Project

Standardized testing has always been a racial project in the United States. The idea of intelligence testing was originally imported from France, where in 1904 French psychologist Alfred Binet first developed the IQ test to assess if young children had mild developmental disabilities. The IQ, or “intelligence

quotient,” of a child was determined by dividing mental age (according to the test score) by the chronological age. However, cognitive psychologists in the United States such as Henry Goddard, Lewis Terman, and Robert Yerkes misappropriated Binet’s idea, distorted the original use of the tests, injected their own underlying presumptions about humans and human ability, and fit their findings into the race and class politics of the United States at the turn of the 20th century (Gould, 1996). With the explicit support of educational philanthropists like Carnegie (Karier, 1972), these psychologists contributed greatly to the idea that IQ was hereditary and fixed, thus establishing the justification for the use of standardized testing to sorting and ranking of human populations by race, ethnicity, gender, and class according to supposedly inborn, biologically innate intelligence (Au, 2009b; Gould, 1996).

In 1917, Yerkes, working with Goddard and Terman, developed the Alpha and Beta Army tests and administered them to 1.75 million Army recruits during World War I to sort incoming soldiers and to determine their “mental fitness.” Based on the results of what he deemed to be an objective assessment, Yerkes concluded that the intelligence of European immigrants could largely be judged by their country of origin, with the lighter skinned northern and western Europeans being more intelligent than the darker peoples of eastern and southern Europe. Similarly, Yerkes found that those of higher income were more intelligent than those of lower income as well (Giordano, 2005; Gould, 1996). As Karier (1972) explains, the results of such testing were strongly connected to the existing social order:

Designing the Stanford-Binet intelligence test, Terman developed questions which were based on presumed progressive difficulty in performing tasks which he believed were necessary for achievement in ascending the hierarchical occupational structure. He then proceeded to find that according to the results of his tests the intelligence of different occupational classes fit his ascending hierarchy. It was little wonder that IQ reflected social class bias. It was, in fact, based on the social class order. (pp. 163-164)

Even at this time, standardized testing was a racial project. Not surprisingly, among his other findings, Yerkes also concluded that African Americans were the least intelligent of all peoples (Giordano, 2005; Gould, 1996), and with the explicit support from these psychologists, eugenicists of the time advanced the idea that race mixing was spreading the supposedly inferior intelligence genes of African Americans, other non-White people, and immigrants (Selden, 1999). Thus, over 100 years ago and at their very origins, standardized tests were being used to structure racial inequalities through providing “scientific” proof to notions of the inherent inferiority of Black people, specific ethnicities, and the poor, among other groups.

With the promise of the efficient sorting of students, standardized IQ testing soon found its way into education. As Tyack (1974) explains,

Intelligence testing and other forms of measurement provided the technology for classifying children. Nature-nurture controversies might pepper the scientific periodicals and magazines of the intelligentsia, but schoolmen found IQ tests an invaluable means of channelling children; by the very act of channelling pupils, they helped to make IQ prophecies self-fulfilling. (p. 180)

Indeed, in 1919, Terman, then a Stanford University professor of psychology, and under the sponsorship of the National Academy of Sciences, was central in adapting the Alpha and Beta army tests into the National Intelligence Tests for use with schoolchildren. By 1920, over 400,000 copies of these tests had been sold nationwide, and by late 1925, Terman reported sales of this test at nearly 1.5 million copies of the Stanford Achievement Test, which he developed. A survey of 215 cities with populations over 10,000 in 1925 found that 64% of these cities used intelligence tests to classify and sort elementary students, 56% used tests to sort junior high school students, and 41 did the same for high school students (Chapman, 1988). By 1932, 112 of 150 large city school systems in the United States were using intelligence testing to place students into ability groups, and universities had also begun to use these tests to justify admissions as well (Haney, 1984).

The responses of communities of color to standardized IQ testing in the early-to-mid 1900s can also help us understand early standardized testing as a racial project. For instance, prominent African American educators were acutely aware of the ways in which IQ testing was being used to further racial inequality and support the racist eugenics movement. Horace Mann Bond—the Director of the School of Education at Langston University in Oklahoma, was one of the earliest African American educators to publicly challenge the findings of prominent psychologists involved in the IQ testing and eugenics movements. In 1924, Bond critiqued IQ testing and eugenics in *Crisis*, the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In addition, writing in 1940, W. E. B. DuBois recalled,

It was not until I was long out of school and indeed after the (first) World War that there came the hurried use of the new technique of psychological tests, which were quickly adjusted so as to put black folk absolutely beyond the possibility of civilization. (As quoted in Guthrie, 1998, p. 55)

As Stoskopf (1999) explains, the lower scores of African Americans were regularly used to track Black students into vocational education or for White

teachers to explain away any difficulties they might be having with Black students in their classrooms.

Meritocracy, Objectivity, and Standardized Testing as a Racial Project

As the above quotation from DuBois illustrates, one of the things that Black educational leaders challenged was the bias behind standardized IQ testing—a challenge worth making based on the racialized and class-based test scores (Giordano, 2005; Gould, 1996; Tyack, 1974). However, despite these challenges, with the support of leading psychologists and popular opinion, such standardized testing was seen as providing an objective measure of intelligence and ability. In turn, this presumptive objectivity provided the foundation for the idea that standardized testing provided a fair and accurate measurement of individual effort, paving the way for psychologists, philanthropists, and educators to sort students using test scores and ultimately serving ideologically to deny structural inequalities (Au, 2013). The logic of test-based structural denial works thusly: If standardized tests provide for the fair and objective measurement of individuals, then standardized testing holds the promise that every test taker is objectively offered a fair and equal chance at educational, social, and economic achievement. Problems like racism and class privilege are thus supposedly neutralized through testing. As Sacks (1999) notes, these logics were advanced in the early years of standardized testing, where such tests were seen as a means for challenging class privileges. This is the root of the idea that standardized testing, both historically and today, can be a means of challenging inequality, and it is the way that standardized testing helps uphold the ideology of meritocracy in the United States.

The ideology of meritocracy asserts that, regardless of social position, economic class, gender, race, or culture (or any other form of socially or institutionally defined difference), everyone has an equal chance at becoming “successful” based purely on individual merit and hard work. Consequently, the ideology of meritocracy also asserts that failure is due to an individual person’s (or individual group’s) lack of effort and hard work (Lemann, 1999; Sacks, 1999). As a racial project, if standardized tests provide an objective measure, then low test scores and the educational failure of working class, children of color is due to their own deficiencies (personal, cultural, racial, or otherwise), lack of hard work, or what has been referred to in one of the most recent educational fads, a lack of “grit” (Horn, 2012; Thomas, 2014). This construction of standardized testing as an objective measure of merit was, as

Karier (1972) explains, built by those in power who believed in the superiority of their own talents:

Most testers refused to admit the possibility that they were, perhaps, servants of privilege, power and status, and preferred instead to believe and “hope” that what they were measuring was, in fact, true “merit.” This was also an act of faith, a faith based on the belief that somehow the “prestige hierarchy of occupations” and the people in it who provided the objective standard upon which the tests were based, were there not because of privilege, wealth, power status and violence, but because of superior talent and virtue. This was a fundamental axiom in the liberal’s faith in meritocracy which emerged in twentieth century American education. (p. 169)

In this way, and continuing to think through standardized testing as a racial project, we are reminded of the material construction of these tests. They were (and are) created, administered, interpreted, analyzed, reported on, and made sense of by actual people—people with social, cultural, racial, and economic locations, vested interests, questioned or unquestioned assumptions, biases, histories, and so forth. To understand standardized testing as a racial project (both the fundament of testing historically and its modern progeny in high-stakes, standardized testing), then, we have to understand the ways that testing was used to shape “what race *means* in a particular discursive or ideological practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially *organized*, based on that meaning” (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 125, emphasis in original). As such, with the empirical evidence provided by presumptively “objective” standardized tests, Whites and wealthy elites could mask their own structural advantages, deny the existence of systemic racism, justify racial hierarchies, and structure specific racial groups as less intelligent and inferior (Au, 2009b, 2013), all under the guise of “naturally” occurring aptitude among individuals (Bisseret, 1979) competing within a meritocratic framework.

It is important to take a moment and note that test-based, racialized notions of IQ are not simply archaic ideas thrown to the dustbins of history. In the modern era for instance, using standardized test scores for their data, Herrnstein and Murray (1996) claimed that there was an intelligence hierarchy of races, where African Americans were the least intelligent of all races, followed by Latinos, Whites, and Asian Americans who, according to the authors, were supposedly the most intelligent. As another example, Rushton and Jensen (2005) have more recently asserted that genetically based racial differences in IQ are real (Jensen is professor emeritus of educational psychology at University of California, Berkeley), and others such as Barrow

and Rouse (2006), a senior economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago and a professor of economics and public affairs at Princeton, respectively, explicitly rely on the work of Herrnstein and Murray (1996) as a baseline for their analysis of the relationship between race, education, and pay. As such raced-based and biological notions of IQ are not artifacts of the early 20th century but are instead still living among us in mainstream discourse and in the academy.

Meritocracy 2.0 and High-Stakes Testing as a Modern-Day Racial Project

Now, over 100 years removed from the early years of standardized testing and in the midst of the ubiquity of high-stakes, standardized testing in schools, we see the same mix of the presumed objectivity of standardized test measurement, the ideology of meritocracy, and the notion that testing can be used to ameliorate racial inequalities. However, one key difference is that this modern day mix is swathed by neoliberalism, and in the current context, it is critical to understand how the ideology of meritocracy fits the neoliberal project in such a complementary manner. As discussed previously, neoliberalism is in part based on a core concept of individual free choice and competition within a deregulated market (Harvey, 2007; Lipman, 2011). Thus, the neoliberal individual is in essence an individual free from the constraints of social, economic, historical, institutional, and cultural structures. Likewise, the neoliberal individual can freely compete (as an individual) against other free individuals, and the hardest working, savviest, most virtuous individual will succeed. For the neoliberal individual, racism and other forms of systematic power outside of the market are considered obsolete and non-existent, and all that matters for success is individual drive, determination, sacrifice, and hard work. Fundamentally, this is the ideology of meritocracy of old, but reborn within the framework of global free-market capitalism as Meritocracy 2.0.

The neoliberal frame also shifts the racial project of standardized testing in critical ways because it recasts high-stakes, standardized testing using neoliberal multiculturalism as a form of official, neoliberal anti-racism (Melamed, 2011). In this neoliberal recasting, high-stakes, standardized testing plays a dual role. On one hand, testing and test data are constructed as the basis for competition in the education market, under the neoliberal multicultural assumption that the test-based market mechanism can and will promote racial equality. On the other hand, taking the form of official, neoliberal anti-racism, high-stakes, standardized tests establish the right of individuals of all races to gain access to education through the fair, objective, test-based measurement of them as (de-raced) individuals, since within the framework Meritocracy 2.0

race or racism does not really exist within the parameters of test performance. Thus, while disregarding the existence of structural racism and how it affects all aspects of educational performance, as well as disregarding any bias in the testing instrument itself, raising the test scores of children of color and closing test score achievement gaps between different racial and economic groups become the paramount expression of official, neoliberal anti-racism in corporate education reform.

The neoliberal multicultural project, as expressed through neoliberal anti-racism, is perhaps most clearly articulated through U.S. federal education policy in recent decades. High-stakes, standardized testing rose to prominence in education reform in the United States through the 1990s and culminated in federal education policy in the 2002 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, redubbed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB amounted to a federal mandate to require standardized testing in every U.S. state, with the threat that if test scores were not raised across various subgroups related to race, economic class, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners, among others, schools and districts would face a variety of possible punishments including loss of control of federal education monies, the complete reconstitution of a school's staff, takeover by a charter management organization, or school closures (Au, 2009b; Karp, 2003). Furthermore, NCLB officially ushered in the era of neoliberal, market-driven education reform in the United States because it used the scores generated by the high-stakes, standardized tests as the baseline metric and data for choices, punishments, and survival within the educational market, and it encoded competition, deregulation, the privatization of formerly public services, and concepts of choice into federal education policy in the form of charter schools and private contracting, among other reforms (Apple, 2006).

NCLB, as part of the neoliberal multicultural project, was itself built on a cornerstone of official, neoliberal anti-racism. Indeed, as the name explicitly decrees, no child will be left behind. As federal policy, NCLB was thus constructed around using arguments that high-stakes, standardized testing is a tool for achieving racial equality. For instance, in 2002, using a refrain that has become all too common, then President George W. Bush asserted that "Education is the great civil rights issue of our time" ("Bush Calls Education," 2002), as part of his argument in support of his education reform agenda. Two years later, in a speech delivered at Harvard, Bush's then Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, suggested that closing race-based achievement gaps in test scores was "... the civil rights issue of our time" (Feinberg, 2004). During a question and answer period after the same speech, Paige answered a question critical of testing in a way that illustrates the assumptions underlying his support of high-stakes, standardized tests. He stated, "We should enable success,

but I don't object to making decisions based on how a student performs on a valid, reliable, objective assessment tool" (Feinberg, 2004). This wielding of civil rights discourse to name educational inequality and support the continued use of high-stakes standardized testing as a tool in the fight against racial inequality has continued into the administration of President Barack Obama, where, for instance, reflecting the neoliberal turn in Black politics (Spence, 2013), President Obama has said that education is the "civil rights issue of our time" (Cooper, 2011), and his Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan has also asserted that "Education is the Civil Rights movement of our generation" (Ballasy, 2011). Meanwhile, the Obama Administration's signature education policy program, *Race to the Top* (U.S. Department of Education, 2009), not only further advanced the neoliberal, corporate education reforms seeded in NCLB, but it also pushed for even more strident use of high-stakes, standardized testing in student, teacher, and school evaluation (Au, in press; Karp, 2012).

As the above examples illustrate, educational policymakers, as well as many others in the United States, have established a tradition of wrapping education reforms around civil rights discourse, fundamentally linking the use of high-stakes, standardized testing to concepts of racial justice in education and beyond (E. Brown, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Heubert, 2001). In this way, the advancement of testing in the name of civil rights and in the deployment of state-sanctioned policy highlights how high-stakes testing is used as an expression of official anti-racism within neoliberal multiculturalism (Melamed, 2011). Here we have heads of state, drawing on legacies of racial justice and equality, expressly recalibrating the state apparatus of federal education policy around an agenda of official anti-racism, attempting to control the idea high-stakes testing "counts" as a race matter, and attempting to structure these racialized linkages as legitimate, common sense knowledge within the domain of education policy and practice. Consequently, the use of high-stakes, standardized testing becomes linked with discourses of anti-racist political activism, where testing for racial equality can now be equated with marches, sit-ins, and other forms of protest. This idea, that modern day high-stakes, standardized testing is being used to promote racial justice, is empirically testable, inasmuch that we can turn to empirical research to interrogate the fundamental claim advanced by advocates for using testing to achieve racial justice in education, namely, we can pose the question, "Has the use of high-stakes, standardized testing produced more equitable outcomes (e.g., closed race-based achievement gaps) and improved the quality of education of children of color?"

Answering the first part of the above question is fairly straightforward. Analyses of National Assessment of Educational Progress test scores, as well

as other cross-state test score analyses, show that not only have test score gaps between White students and students of color (particularly Blacks and Latinos) not closed, they have also increased since the implementation of NCLB and the federal mandate requiring the use of high-stakes, standardized testing (Lee, 2006; National Research Council, 2011; Ravitch, 2013). As for the relationship between high-stakes testing and the quality of education for children of color, empirical research can answer that as well. Nationally speaking, multiple individual studies (see, for example, Center on Education Policy [CEP], 2007; Renter et al., 2006; Rosenbusch, 2005) as well as analyses synthesizing large bodies of research on testing (Au, 2007, 2009b) have established that high-stakes testing environments compel teachers and schools to focus increasingly on tested subjects like mathematics and literacy to the increasing exclusion of less tested subjects like social studies and sciences, and sometimes to the total exclusion of art, music, and physical education. Furthermore, these studies have confirmed that teachers, in direct response to the pressures exerted by high-stakes, standardized tests, have increasingly resorted to less engaging, more teacher-centered, rote lecture to cover tested materials—where in some cases teachers are required to follow the district-mandated instructional scripts that dictate exactly what they are allowed to say to students (Au, 2011). Further still, because high-stakes, standardized testing, as a racial project, functions to concentrate failure in low-income, communities of color, this phenomenon of test-related curricular and pedagogic squeeze happens at significantly higher rates for these populations (Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2005; von Zastrow, 2004). Consequently, as a result of high-stakes testing, low-income, children of color are subjected to a qualitatively different educational experience than that of their Whiter, more affluent counterparts—who have a much higher likelihood accessing a more engaging, content-rich education.

The test-induced curricular and pedagogic squeeze also illustrates how modern day high-stakes, standardized testing operates as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism. In this case, we have high-stakes testing being used as a tool to support market mechanisms within education and advocated for in the name of racial justice. However, it is crucial to note that even the above-mentioned curricular and pedagogic squeeze is racialized: In the same way that specific curriculum and teaching strategies are being diminished, high-stakes testing has also forced multicultural curriculum and culturally relevant pedagogies that can speak more directly to children of color and their communities out of the curriculum and out of the classroom (Au, 2009a; Darder & Torres, 2004; McNeil, 2000). Thus, consistent with Meritocracy 2.0 and neoliberal anti-racism, and as evidence of what Bonilla-Silva (Bonilla-Silva, 2013) refers to as colorblind racism, we see a process where

in the name of racial equality in education, race and culture in teaching and learning become anathema to the officially sanctioned, raceless, “correct” knowledge and pedagogy as defined by the tests. In this sense, and as part of the neoliberal multicultural project, to be “anti-racist” is defined as being against the act of naming race—as race has nothing to do with test-validated knowledge and learning, and being against the admission that systemic racism even exists—as the “objectivity” of the test excludes that possibility.

High-Stakes Testing and the Disciplining of Black and Brown Bodies

Another way that modern-day high-stakes, standardized testing operates as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism is through the ways that these tests are used to discipline Black and Brown students specifically and disproportionately. Significant test score achievement gaps between rich and poor students and between racial groups are persistent (Ladson-Billings, 2006; National Research Council, 2011; Ravitch, 2013), meaning that failure, as defined by test scores, is concentrated in low-income children of color. This is why, as discussed earlier, children of color have experienced sharper curricular and pedagogic squeeze, resulting in a qualitatively different education than that experienced by their White, affluent counterparts (Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Nichols et al., 2005; von Zastrow, 2004). An outcome of this process is that low-income students of color (as well as their teachers and their schools) are rendered visible as failures through high-stakes, standardized testing. This kind of visibility allows disciplinary power to be enacted on low-income, children of color by arranging them as racialized objects of failure (Melamed, 2011). As Foucault (1995) explains, such visibility,

... assures the hold of power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. And the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification. In this space of domination, disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially, by arranging objects. (p. 187)

As such, systems of high-stakes, standardized testing place low-income, students of color within an ever-increasing web of surveillance (Hanson, 2000), where the high-stakes attached to the tests function to discipline and punish not just the system of public education itself (Vinson & Ross, 2003), but also to discipline and punish Black and Brown children. Put in more grounded

terms, systems of high-stakes, standardized testing and the policies built around them establish a system of surveillance and an environment of teaching and learning under constant threat. For children of color, then, high-stakes testing serves to acculturate them to a norm of being disciplined by state authorities.

The relationship between high-stakes, standardization and the disciplining of Black and Brown bodies becomes even more concrete when we look at evidence surrounding high school exit exams and the school-to-prison pipeline. We know that, just like all other high-stakes, standardized tests, high school exit exams have a disproportionately negative impact on non-White children (Zabala, 2007), where Black and Latino students fail such exams at higher rates than their White peers and are far more likely to drop out of high school as a result. For instance, when Massachusetts implemented a high-stakes test-based accountability system in the 1990s, it witnessed a 300% increase in dropouts, and with the implementation of a graduate exit exam, it saw a 4% decline in graduating students. Predictably, the exit exam failures and dropouts were disproportionately African American and Latino (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Furthermore, there is a direct relationship between exit exams, dropping out of high school, and increased incarceration rates: A study commissioned by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that standards-based high school exit exams correlated with an increase in the rate of incarceration by 12.5% (Baker & Lang, 2013). Hence, high-stakes, standardized testing, as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism, empirically works to surveil, discipline, and punish Black and Brown children, all in the name of racial justice and neoliberal anti-racism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this article I have argued that standardized testing has functioned as a racial project historically, and that its progeny, modern-day high-stakes, standardized testing now functions as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism. In doing so, I have discussed how standardized IQ testing was stitched together with the presumed objectivity of the tests to mask structural racism in schools and society through the ideology of meritocracy. I have also argued that these very same strands exist today, albeit transformed under neoliberalism in what I called Meritocracy 2.0. To make these arguments, I used the concepts of neoliberal multiculturalism, official anti-racism (Melamed, 2011), and racial projects (Omi & Winant, 2015) to explain how high-stakes, standardized testing, as an assessment tool, can be wrapped around concepts of racial equality vis-à-vis forms of neoliberal anti-racism—which we see operationalized through the use of civil rights discourse to promote testing. I

then drew on empirical research on high-stakes, standardized testing to highlight how such testing has negatively affected the education of children of color in terms of curriculum and pedagogy, as well as research on high school exit exams and dropouts to point out how high-stakes tests materially contribute to not only the disciplining of Black and Brown students specifically, but also directly to the school-to-prison pipeline.

The central point of my argument here has been to assert that any and all claims to the use of high-stakes, standardized testing to promote racial equity and justice are ideologically driven and demonstrably false in the face of the materially racist effects of testing on children of color. Although this argument is not particularly new (see, for example, Karier, 1972), nor is it one that can be relegated solely to the United States (see, for example, Gillborn, 2013, for similar policy moves in England), the struggles over the relationship between high-stakes testing and racial inequality in the United States are currently at a critical juncture. For example, the sharp increase in high-stakes, standardized testing has provoked a significant, popular backlash among students, parents, and teachers such that a movement to “opt-out” and refuse to take the tests has developed in its wake (Hagopian, 2014). The opt-out movement is particularly threatening to current, neoliberal education reform efforts because it removes the tests and the data they produce from the equation altogether, thus challenging the fundamental metric on which neoliberal education reforms depend on entirely. In response, a group of 12 mainstream civil rights organizations issued a press release decrying the opt-out movement, claiming that test score data were critical to pushing for racial justice and fighting racial inequality in education (E. Brown, 2015). Consequently, education activists (Hagopian & Network for Public Education, 2015) and other, more progressive civil rights organizations (J. Brown, 2015) pushed back, citing evidence of the ways that high-stakes testing was harmful to children of color specifically, and public education generally. As this example illustrates, not only are the discourses of civil rights, high-stakes testing, and racial equality still circulating, but that the issue is still very real, alive, and important in educational policy in the United States because neoliberal education reformers are essentially marketizing civil rights and racial equality to advance their policy agendas (Scott, 2013). Taken as a whole, the evidence and arguments I have offered here illustrate the way that high-stakes, standardized testing is implicated in the very process of racialization itself, where

Racialization converts the effects of differential value-making processes into categories of difference that make it possible to order, analyze, describe, and evaluated what emerges out of force relations as the permissible content of

other domains of U.S. modernity (e.g., law, politics, and economy). (Melamed, 2011, p. 11, emphasis in original)

In terms of racialization, we see that high-stakes, standardized testing has a direct role in both the differential value-making process and the conversion of that process into categories of difference, which are then in turn utilized in our racialized sense-making in education and other institutions and domains.

Any recommendations that might flow from the above analysis depend entirely on one's goals. The process of racialization exists, and among other educational policy tools, it is expressed through high-stakes, standardized testing. As such, if the goal is to subvert the entire process of both the neoliberal reform agenda and the role that testing plays in racialization, then one possible recommendation would be to follow the lead of educational activists, students, and teachers in Seattle, New York, and elsewhere, and push for a more broad-based and widespread opt-out movement. As noted above, opting out renders the test-data meaningless and subsequently throws the entire logics and function of the system into question. Opting out also highlights and sharpens the tension surrounding the use of high-stakes, standardized testing as a tool for racial equality, thus also highlighting the contradictions implicit in the neoliberal multicultural education reform project specifically.

In light of the above analysis, another possible recommendation would be to make use of forms of assessment that correlate more strongly with teaching and learning, as opposed to using the current high-stakes, standardized testing that correlate most strongly with economic class and other forms structural inequality (Berliner, 2012).

Other forms of assessment, such as multiple-subject portfolio defenses have been used with great success within the New York Standards Performance Consortium—which have shown to have more equitable outcomes relative to the graduation and college attainment for children of color, working class kids, and students whose first language is not English (Foote, 2005, 2007). These types of assessments do not address the structural issues extant to public schooling, but the data seem to indicate that they produce less discriminatory outcomes, perhaps because they are flexible enough to accommodate the variation of students' needs. Of course, a major limitation of these two recommendations, and a major shortcoming of focusing purely on public education and schooling in general, is that they neglect the structural inequalities that are so prevalent in outside of schools—inequalities that researchers have long known correlate more strongly with educational outcomes than anything else (Au, 2010; Berliner, 2012). Indeed, taking the issue of racialized inequality in schools seriously absolutely requires that we take the issue of racialized

structural inequality outside of schools just as seriously (Anyon, 2005; Dumas, 2008; Dumas & Anyon, 2006).

In the end, high-stakes, standardized testing as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism, the wielding of civil rights discourse to support testing, and the market logics of neoliberal anti-racism are all belied by the historical and material realities of the tests themselves. These tests are far from objective measurements of teaching and learning (Au, 2013; DiMaggio, 2012; Farley, 2009, 2012), they are not improving the education of children of color, and research has consistently confirmed that test scores are determined more by structural conditions affecting students than any kind of individual, meritocratic effort (Berliner, 2012). This is why relying on high-stakes, standardized testing to achieve racial justice in education is fundamentally about ideology and not meeting the material and cultural needs of children and communities of color. By focusing on testing as the lever for equitable education and social reform, policymakers, politicians, pundits, business leaders, and pro-testing non-profits are essentially pretending that a faulty thermometer can cure the root causes of a fever. Because as I have argued here, historically and contemporarily, high-stakes, standardized testing is an artifice and carrier of racial inequality, not a destroyer of it.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Anyon, J. (2005). *Radical possibilities: Public policy, urban education, and a new social movement*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Apple, M. W. (2006). *Educating the "right" way: Markets, standards, god, and inequality* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Apple, M. W., & Au, W. (2009). Politics, theory and reality in critical pedagogy. In A. Kazamias & R. Cowen (Eds.), *International handbook of comparative education* (pp. 991-1007). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Apple, M. W., & Pedroni, T. C. (2005). Conservative alliance building and African American support of vouchers: The end of Brown's promise or a new beginning? *Teachers College Record*, 107, 2068-2105.
- Au, W. (2007). High-stakes testing and curricular control: A qualitative metasynthesis. *Educational Researcher*, 36, 258-267.

- Au, W. (2009a). High-stakes testing and discursive control: The triple bind for non-standard student identities. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 11(2), 65-71.
- Au, W. (2009b). *Unequal by design: High-stakes testing and the standardization of inequality*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Au, W. (2010). Neither fair nor accurate: Research based reasons why high-stakes tests should not be used to evaluate teachers. *Rethinking Schools*, 25(2), 34-38.
- Au, W. (2011). Teaching under the new Taylorism: High-stakes testing and the standardization of the 21st century curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 43, 25-45. doi:10.1080/00220272.2010.521261
- Au, W. (2013). Hiding behind high-stakes testing: Meritocracy, objectivity and inequality in U.S. education. *The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 12(2), 7-19.
- Au, W. (in press). Techies, the tea party, and the common core: The rise of the new upper middle class and tensions in the rightist politics of federal education reform. *The Educational Forum*.
- Au, W., & Ferrare, J. J. (2014). Sponsors of policy: A network analysis of wealthy elites, their affiliated philanthropies, and charter school reform in Washington State. *Teachers College Record*, 116(8). Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?contentid=17387>
- Au, W., & Ferrare, J. J. (Eds.). (2015). *Mapping corporate education reform: Power and policy networks in the neoliberal state*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Baker, O., & Lang, K. (2013). *The effect of high school exit exams on graduation, employment, wages and incarceration*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Ballasy, N. (2011, January 17). *U.S. Secretary of Education: Education is "the civil rights issue of our generation."* Retrieved from <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/us-secretary-education-education-civil-rights-issue-our-generation>
- Barrow, L., & Rouse, C. E. (2006). The economic value of education by race and ethnicity. *Economic Perspectives*, 30(2), 14-27.
- Berliner, D. C. (2012). Effects of inequality and poverty vs. teachers and schooling on America's youth. *Teachers College Record*, 116(1). Available from <http://www.tcrecord.org>
- Bisseret, N. (1979). *Education, class language and ideology*. Boston, MA: Routledge.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2013). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Brown, E. (2015, May 5). Why civil rights groups say parent who opt out of tests are hurting kids. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/why-civil-rights-groups-say-parents-who-opt-out-of-tests-are-hurting-kids/2015/05/05/59884b9a-f32c-11e4-bcc4-e8141e5eb0c9_story.html
- Brown, J. (2015, July 6). *To the honorable Mitch McConnell & the honorable Harry Reid*. Retrieved from <http://www.j4jalliance.com/media/openletter/>
- Burch, P. (2006). The new educational privatization: Educational contracting and high stakes accountability. *Teachers College Record*, 108, 2582-2610.

- Burch, P. (2009). *Hidden markets: The new education privatization*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bush calls education "civil rights issue of our time." (2002, January 19). *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/19/bush.democrats.radio/>
- Center on Education Policy. (2007). *Choices, changes, and challenges: Curriculum and instruction in the NCLB era*. Washington, DC: Author. Available from www.cep.org
- Chapman, P. D. (1988). *Schools as sorters: Lewis M. Terman, applied psychology, and the intelligence testing movement, 1890-1930*. New York: New York University Press.
- Cooper, H. (2011, April 6). Obama takes aim at inequality in education. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/07/us/politics/07obama.html>
- Darder, A., & Torres, R. D. (2004). *After race: Racism after multiculturalism*. New York: New York University Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2004). From "separate but equal" to "No Child Left Behind": The collision of new standards and old inequalities. In D. Meier & G. Wood (Eds.), *Many children left behind: How the not child left behind act is damaging our children and our schools* (pp. 3-32). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2007). Race, inequality and educational accountability: The irony of "No Child Left Behind." *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 10(3), 245-260.
- DiMaggio, D. (2012). The loneliness of the long-distance test scorer. *Monthly Review*, 62(7). Retrieved from <http://monthlyreview.org/2010/12/01/the-loneliness-of-the-long-distance-test-scorer>
- Dumas, M. J. (2008). Theorizing redistribution and recognition in urban education research: "How do we get dictionaries at Cleveland?" In J. Anyon (Ed.), *Theory and educational research: Toward critical social explanation* (pp. 81-103). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Dumas, M. J., & Anyon, J. (2006). Toward a critical approach to education policy implementation. In M. I. Honig (Ed.), *New directions in education policy implementation: Confronting complexity* (pp. 149-186). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Fabricant, M., & Fine, M. (2013). *The changing politics of education: Privatization and the dispossessed lives left behind*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Farley, T. (2009). *Making the grades: My misadventures in the standardized testing industry*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Farley, T. (2012, June 8). *Lies, damn lies, and statistics, or what's really up with automated essay scoring*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/todd-farley/lies-damn-lies-and-statis_b_1574711.html
- Feinberg, C. (2004, April 29). Rod Paige offers high praise for No Child Left Behind: Education secretary marks 50th anniversary of Brown decision with Kennedy School keynote address. *Harvard University Gazette*. Retrieved from <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/2004/04.29/09-brown.html>

- Foote, M. (2005). *The New York performance standards consortium: College performance study*. New York: New York Standards Performance Consortium. Retrieved from <http://performanceassessment.org/consequences/collegeperformancestudy.pdf>
- Foote, M. (2007). Keeping accountability systems accountable. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88, 359-363.
- Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (2nd Vintage Books ed.) (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Gillborn, D. (2013). Interest-divergence and the colour of cutbacks: Race, recession and the undeclared war on Black children. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 34, 477-491. doi:10.1080/01596306.2013.822616
- Giordano, G. (2005). *How testing came to dominate American schools: The history of educational assessment*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Gould, S. J. (1996). *The mismeasure of man* (Rev. & Expanded.). New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
- Guthrie, R. V. (1998). *Even the rat was white: A historical view of psychology* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hagopian, J. (Ed.). (2014). *More than a score: The new uprising against high-stakes testing*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.
- Hagopian, J., & Network for Public Education. (2015, May 5). *Resistance to high stakes tests serves the cause of equity in education: A reply to "We oppose anti-testing efforts."* Retrieved from <http://www.networkforpubliceducation.org/2015/05/resistance-to-high-stakes-tests-serves-the-cause-of-equity-in-education/>
- Haney, W. (1984). Testing reasoning and reasoning about testing. *Review of Educational Research*, 54, 597-654.
- Hanson, A. F. (2000). How tests create what they are intended to measure. In A. Filer (Ed.), *Assessment: social practice and social product* (pp. 67-81). New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Harvey, D. (2007). Neoliberalism as creative destruction. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 610, 22-44.
- Herrnstein, R. J., & Murray, C. A. (1996). *The bell curve: Intelligence and class structure in American life* (1st Free Press pbk). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Heubert, J. P. (2001). High stakes testing and civil rights: Standards of appropriate test use and a strategy for enforcing them. In G. Orfield & M. L. Kornhaber (Eds.), *Raising standards or raising barriers? Inequality and high-stakes testing in public education* (pp. 179-194). New York, NY: New Century Press.
- Horn, J. (2012, December 12). Paul Tough, KIPP, and the character con: A review of "how children succeed: Grit, curiosity, and the hidden power of character." *Substance News*. Retrieved from <http://www.substancenews.net/articles.php?page=3831§ion=Article>
- Karier, C. J. (1972). Testing for order and control in the corporate liberal state. *Educational Theory*, 22, 159-180.
- Karp, S. (2003). Let them eat tests: NCLB and federal education policy. In L. Christensen & S. Karp (Eds.), *Rethinking school reform* (pp. 199-213). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.

- Karp, S. (2012). School reform we can't believe in. *Rethinking Schools*, 24(3). Retrieved from http://www.rethinkingschools.org/restrict.asp?path=archive/24_03/24_03_NCLBstan.shtml
- Kretchmar, K., Sondel, B., & Ferrare, J. J. (2014). Mapping the terrain: Teach for America, charter school reform, and corporate sponsorship. *Journal of Education Policy*, 29, 742-759. doi:10.1080/02680939.2014.880812
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3-12.
- Lee, J. (2006). *Tracking achievement gaps and assessing the impact of NCLB on the gaps: An in-depth look into national and state reading and math outcome trends*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Civil Rights Project.
- Leonardo, Z. (2011). After the glow: Race ambivalence and other educational prognoses. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43, 675-698. doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2010.00645.x
- Leonardo, Z. (2012). The race for class: Reflections on a critical raceclass theory of education. *Educational Studies*, 58, 427-449.
- Lemann, N. (1999). *The big test: The secret history of the American meritocracy*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Lipman, P. (2011). *The new political economy of urban education: Neoliberalism, race, and the right to the city*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Madaus, G. F., & Clarke, M. (2001). The adverse impact of high-stakes testing on minority students: Evidence from one hundred years of test data. In G. Orfield & M. L. Kornhaber (Eds.), *Raising standards or raising barriers? Inequality and high-stakes testing in public education* (pp. 85-106). New York, NY: Century Foundation Press.
- McNeil, L. M. (2000). *Contradictions of school reform: Educational costs of standardized testing*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Melamed, J. (2011). *Represent and destroy: Rationalizing violence in the new racial capitalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- National Research Council. (2011). *Incentives and test-based accountability in education* (M. Hout & S.W. Elliott, Eds.). Washington, DC: Committee on Incentives and Test-Based Accountability in Public Education, Board on Testing and Assessment, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education.
- Nichols, S. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2007). *Collateral damage: How high-stakes testing corrupts America's schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Nichols, S. L., Glass, G. V., & Berliner, D. C. (2005). *High-stakes testing and student achievement: Problems for the No Child Left Behind Act* (No. EPSP-0509-105-EPRU). Tempe: Education Policy Research Unit, Education Policy Studies Laboratory, College of Education, Division of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Arizona State University.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2015). *Racial formations in the United States*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ravitch, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education* (e-book). New York, NY: Basic Books.

- Ravitch, D. (2013). *Reign of error: The hoax of the privatization movement and the danger to America's public schools*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Renter, D. S., Scott, C., Kober, N., Chudowsky, N., Jofstus, S., & Zabala, D. (2006). *From the capital to the classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy. Available from <http://www.cep-dc.org>
- Rosenbusch, M. H. (2005). The No Child Left Behind Act and teaching and learning languages in U.S. schools. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89, 250-261.
- Rushton, P. J., & Jensen, A. R. (2005). Thirty years of research on race differences in cognitive ability. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 11, 234-294.
- Sacks, P. (1999). *Standardized minds: The high price of America's testing culture and what we can do to change it*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.
- Saltman, K. J. (2012). *The failure of corporate school reform*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Scott, J. T. (2013). Rosa parks moment? School choice and the marketization of civil rights. *Critical Studies in Education*, 54, 5-18. doi:10.1080/17508487.2013.739570
- Scott, J. T., & Jabbar, H. (2014). The hub and the spokes: Foundations, intermediary organizations, incentivist reforms, and the politics of research evidence. *Educational Policy*, 28, 233-257.
- Selden, S. (1999). *Inheriting shame: The story of eugenics and racism in America*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Spence, L. K. (2013). The neoliberal turn in Black politics. *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*, 14, 139-159. doi:10.1080/10999949.2012.763682
- Stoskopf, A. (1999). The forgotten history of eugenics. *Rethinking Schools*, 13, 12-13.
- Stovall, D. (2015). Mayoral control: Reform, whiteness, and critical race analysis of neoliberal educational policy. In B. Picower & E. Mayorga (Eds.), *What's race got to do with it? How current school reform policy maintains racial and economic inequality* (pp. 45-58). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Taylor, S. (1997). Critical policy analysis: Exploring contexts, texts, and consequences. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 18, 23-35.
- Thomas, P. L. (2014, December 4). *Grit, education narratives veneer for White, wealth privilege*. Retrieved from <https://radicalsolarship.wordpress.com/2014/12/04/grit-education-narratives-veneer-for-white-wealth-privilege/>
- Tyack, D. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2009). *Race to the Top program executive summary*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Vinson, K. D., & Ross, E. W. (2003). Controlling images: The power of high-stakes testing. In K. J. Saltman & D. A. Gabbard (Eds.), *Education as enforcement: The militarization and corporatization of schools* (pp. 241-258). New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

- von Zastrow, C. (2004). *Academic atrophy: The condition of the liberal arts in America's public schools*. Washington, DC: Council for Basic Education. Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org/html/Document.asp?chouseid=5058>
- Zabala, D. (2007). *State high school exit exams: Gaps persist in high school exit exam pass rates—Policy brief 3*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy.
- Zeichner, K. M., & Pena-Sandoval, C. (2015). Venture philanthropy and teacher education policy in the U.S.: The role of the New Schools Venture Fund. *Teachers College Record*, 117(6). Available from <http://www.tcrecord.org>

Author Biography

Wayne Au is an Associate Professor in the School of Educational Studies at the University of Washington Bothell and is an editor for the social justice education magazine, *Rethinking Schools*. His work focuses broadly on critical education theory and practice and critical education policy studies, with emphases on social justice, high-stakes testing, and neoliberal education reform. His most recent book, co-edited with Joseph J. Ferrare, is *Mapping Corporate Education Reform: Power and Policy Networks in the Neoliberal State* (Routledge, 2015).