Postcolonial Technologies of Power:
Standardized Testing and Representing Diverse Young Children

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The words "after 9/11, the world changed" have been reiterated, with different meanings and in different contexts, by diverse groups of people. Recognizing the fact that the people for whom the world seems to have changed the most have probably not had either the access or the time to engage in this dialogue about change, some scholars, postcolonial and otherwise, have been calling for a renewed commitment from academics to enter into work that goes beyond the "Ivory Tower" and to take on the role of public intellectuals (Barsky & Ali, 2006; Chomsky, 1967) in this changed world. In the area of postcolonial studies, there has been a renewed focus on the technologies through which imperial projects are carried out whether "abroad" or "at home," although the two are not necessarily so neatly divisible.

The particular form of unquestioned technology that is explored in detail in this paper is standardized testing. One of the reasons why it invokes such interest is that it is upheld by both the right and the left as an "objective" assessment of how both schools and children are performing (Kohn, 2000). However, there is a growing body of research and resistance that views testing as the ultimate imposition of not only rampant scientifism, if there is such a word, but also of corporate

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capitalism upon children and schools. The impetus for testing reflects corporate strategies that have been used all over the world by big business (Park & Schwarz, 2005): *create a need and then try to fulfill it*. Within educational contexts, Kohn (1999) has shown how many recent reports on American public education have been authored not by educational professionals but by representatives of big business such as the Business Coalition for Education Reform, the Business Roundtable, the National Alliance of Business and the Committee for Education Reform. As Miyoshi (1993) has commented, whereas the "old" colonialism used nations, ethnicities and races as its building blocks, the "new colonialism" operates more through transnational corporations. This new colonialism, Miyoshi cautions, is harder to isolate and counter, as it operates through multiple locations and through global networks. Scholars such as Martin (2004) have commented that, in its never ending search for new ground, modern capitalist colonialism has increasingly concentrated on the sphere of domestic life as an avenue for profit making: citizens are being redefined as consumers, and the home is being transformed from a sanctuary into a "command post for market manipulation" (p. 352). Similarly schools too are now increasingly being targeted for such attention, most strikingly through the nation wide imposition of standardized testing (Cannella & Viruru, 2004).

Much of the critique of standardized testing has centered on such effects as the limited and narrow curricula it has created in schools and on how it has been tied to high stakes: where jobs, salaries and in some cases the very existence of schools are tied to high test scores. The effects that these policies are having on schools has also been documented: widespread teaching to the test, the elimination of recess and playtime for young children and so forth (Ohanian, 2002; Kohn, 2000). This paper attempts to strengthen these paths of resistance by exploring another part of testing that has not received much attention until now: what kind of material is actually on these tests? With so much focus on the tests being directed towards the skills that are covered by it, and making sure that the children know those skills, little attention has been directed toward the medium through which those skills are assessed. As the analyses to follow will show, the selection of content seems to reflect some very determined agendas.

In this paper I first look briefly at how standardized testing has been created as an imperialist project. Second, the main body of the paper is dedicated to an in-depth look at the technologies of power that are evident in the content of the reading portion of various state standardized tests and how they contain rampantly colonialist images of people of color. With mandatory standardized testing a reality in every state in the

United States, it is more important than ever that tests be scrutinized as to what kind of content they include. The analyses presented in this paper suggest that standardized testing for young children is colonizing: (1) the way in which testing has been constructed represents corporate rather than child centered agendas; (2) the ideology of diversity represented in many public policies, particularly standardized testing, instituted in the United States is gravely limited; and (3) by mandating that children take tests but by not regulating the content that is part of those tests, racist and colonialist ideas are being presented to children in legitimate forms. Officially the goals of the tests are to measure whether or not children can identify the main idea of a passage or parts of a sentence. However, this paper focuses on other agendas that may be contained within/imposed by the tests. The logic of the tests seems to be that the content of the reading passages is essentially irrelevant, as the tests are not about content but about testing comprehension powers. This is an example of the kind of imperialistic logic that makes the tests so dangerous.

Philosophical Perspectives

Standardized testing, at least in its current *avatar*, is perhaps more of an "American" preoccupation rather than a global concern (see Santos 2005 for postcolonial perspectives on the use of the term American to refer to citizens of the United States). In this paper, I examine the construction of standardized testing not only as a cultural product but as an imperialistic product. Recent postcolonial scholarship has focused on the need to direct an anti-imperialist gaze not only upon U.S. policies around the world but also within the United States. Not only are U.S. domestic policies considered important because of their potential to impact the rest of the world, but also because they appear to be cloaked in a myth of what Park and Schwarz (2005) call "American exceptionalism . . . that fetishizes the ideals of freedom and democracy and claims them as their own national property" (p. 153). The unique kind of discourse and dialogue that surround the constitution of public policies is important to examine and deconstruct, as they are part of the new imperialism: the kind of colonialism that has less to do with the conquest of lands and property and more to do with constructing human beings within limited life trajectories and paths. Park and Schwarz consider it vitally important to engage in the kind of intellectual work that not only documents the cultural, economic and political changes being wrought through American policies around the world, but also to look how it has imposed itself as world domination. This is especially important in light of the arguments by such scholars as Ducille (1996) who have argued that the rhetoric of American

imperialism has been always grounded upon internal violence against its own minority populations. Feldman (2004) has cautioned that the United States is at war with more than terror, it is also engaged in what he calls "deterritorialized wars of public safety" (p. 330): wars that focus on achieving specific kinds of internal hegemony, through the symbiosis of fear and other directed aggression.

A critical examination of standardized testing as an imperialist product cannot take place without a recognition of the context in which it is being constituted. American troops are currently stationed in 19 countries around the world (Johnson, 2004). Americans constitute 6% of the world's population but consume 25% of the world's resources. Further, as Park and Schwarz point out, many national policies in the United States have directed resources away from the most vulnerable parts of the population, as part of a larger plan for greater economic and territorial domination. This is certainly a critique that has been applied to national policies on standardized testing (Ohanian, 2002). Another aspect of American imperialism that is particularly significant, according to Park and Schwarz, is its ability to define its enemy in terms that allows it the freedom to engage in unconventional tactics and to appoint itself the defender of morality and ethics. The example cited is how the United States currently considers itself as engaged in a war on "terror" (as opposed to terrorism): the use of a newer term allows for it to be defined and situated among certain specific populations, who can then be engaged with and controlled in specific ways. Similarly, the rhetoric behind standardized testing has focused on the need for "measurability" and "accountability": vacuous terms in an educational context, terms that allow for new forms of domination. Furthermore, American imperialism (for a further discussion of the genealogy of this term see Kaplan & Pease, 2002) is also often justified as acceptable, since it has, at least its own eyes, already achieved ideal domestic order (Trombold, 2005). When trying to put the affairs of the world in order, the contrast is often made between those untidy spaces in which it is, noblesse oblige, forced to intervene, and its own ideal self. Thus, according to Trombold, what "America" is trying to impose upon the world is its own version of imperial multiculturalism. It is in this light that I believe we should examine standardized testing.

In line with other American imperialist endeavors, the constitution of standardized testing too forefront issues of "multiculturalism": tests, on the one hand, are defended as putting in place standards for all children, no matter what their background, thus ensuring that all children receive an equal education. Simultaneously however, the same tests end up defining children of color as the populations at the highest risk of not meeting standards, thus subjecting them to labeling, tracking

and limited opportunities. Donaldson (1992) has shown how the American "justice" system, which claims to be an instrument that assures freedom, is in fact complicit in the marginalization and impoverishment of Native Americans in the United States. Donaldson reminds us that much of the global power that the U.S. currently enjoys is based on the lands and resources usurped from the Native Americans. As Park and Schwarz put it "the discourse of nation is indeed complicit in the construction of the imperial imaginary in the way the nation does not include race per se, but rather racializes those included, unequally, in its constitution" (p. 157). Comments by public figures such as Bork (1996) unabashedly laud the Eurocentric nature of American culture, as the best the world has to offer, since it was the originator of democracy and capitalism.

This is the rationale that is used to spread order around the world. It would appear that for this civilizing mission to prosper domestic cultural discourses have to be kept under tight control. I believe that the content of standardized tests is one of those discourses. The content analyses described in this paper, performed upon items included in standardized tests definitely indicate that not only do the tests reflect only limited forms of cultural knowledge, but often present people of color in unflattering ways. If, as many postcolonial scholars argue, America is trying to mold the world in its own image, looking at what is on standardized tests can give us an up close look at that image.

The argument could be presented that standardized tests, although mandated by the federal government, are actually written by testing companies, which would absolve the government of some responsibility. This argument does not stand up very well in light of the postcolonial argument, that within new forms of imperialism:

> 'privatization,' rather than limiting state power as is so often assumed, actually extends the web of state power when the state seeks to achieve its purposes by using 'private' actors. (Passavant, 2004, p. 381)

Passavant comments that in a post 9/11 world, even if the emphasis has been upon smaller government, this has not always translated into less control over people's lives. Rather, states have sought out other ways in which to achieve their power (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). This, according to Passavant, is sometimes termed as government by proxy. One way in which this is achieved is through the use of contract workers: according to Crenson and Ginsberg (2002) the Department of Education reduced its workforce by 6% between 1984 and 1996, while increasing their contract force by 129% (cited in Passavant, 2004). Many scholars have commented upon how this link was made obvious when, immediately after 9/11, President Bush encouraged people to spend money as a patriotic act, thus

blurring the lines between government and business (Crenson & Ginsberg, 2002). Standardized testing is another example of such a conflation of interests between business and government.

Within this context, where government and business are seen as working closely together towards the same goals, Passavant raises a critical question as to how private spaces handle the question of dissent. According to him, in the increasingly urbanized American landscape, suburban shopping malls have increasingly become the "public" space where people gather. However, this space is not really public, in that it is privately owned, and as such the right to freedom of speech in these areas is controlled. Currently according to Passavant, "there is no First Amendment right to free speech in malls; claiming a right to free speech depends upon the laws of the state" (p. 394). I would argue that standardized tests occupy a similar position in public schools: they are public in the sense that all children have to take them, yet private in the sense that they are written by corporations, upon whom the public has no control. Here too the right to free speech is curtailed: students do not have the right to question what is on the test, or to refuse to take it. Furthermore, the air of secrecy that governs the tests is legendary: few people are allowed to see them and very few states make them available for public scrutiny (Ohanian, 2002). Interestingly, as authors such as Dean (2004) have commented, although the public seems to be aware of some of the problems with standardized tests, there has been little opposition to them. Dean describes this attitude as a "fetishistic disavowal": reflecting a standpoint of "I know but nevertheless I believe" (Zizek, 1991).

Critiques of Standardized Testing

Although there seems to be bipartisan political support for the idea that testing children is the only real way in which to measure how both they and their schools are performing, within popular culture there is also a growing body of dissent that is challenging their control over the schools. Bracey (2002) has said that in the new millennium "terrible things are being done in the name of high stakes testing" (p. 49). Nevertheless the most sweeping reform put in place by the much touted *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) is the imposition of standardized tests upon every child in U.S. public schools, starting in the third grade. Incidentally, testing is spreading to earlier and earlier grade levels, with some efforts being made to include mandated testing as part of Head Start (Cannella & Viruru, 2004).

The official discourse of standardized testing, particularly through the NCLB Act, is of high expectations, ending what has been termed the

"soft racism" of low expectations for all, and of greater achievement (Lee, 2006). A foreword by George W. Bush to the act reads:

> The quality of our public schools directly affects us all as parents, as students, and as citizens. Yet too many children in America are segregated by low expectations, illiteracy, and self-doubt. In a constantly changing world that is demanding increasingly complex skills from its workforce, children are literally being left behind. (http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/reports/no-child-left-behind.html)

More specifically the act calls for what it defines as increased accountability for student performance:

> States, districts and schools that improve achievement will be rewarded. Failure will be sanctioned. Parents will know how well their child is learning, and that schools are held accountable for their effectiveness with annual state reading and math assessments in grades 3-8. (ibid.)

Thus schools are perceived as deficient as they are not preparing children with the requisite "complex skills" that big businesses demand. The answer to this is testing: determine the curriculum through a mandated standardized test.

Corporate agendas, however, do not end there but rather constitute a far more complex web of power and control. In Chicago, for example, expulsion rates for children from both elementary and secondary schools have risen, supposedly in the name of higher standards. However, expelled children are being directed to specially designed private 'programs' for them, thus making expulsions also a profit generating enterprise (Meier, 2000). Test scores have also correspondingly risen over a 3-year period by 3.4%. However, other programs, such as one in Lynfield, Massachusetts that ensured that mostly minority children attended schools in affluent mostly White communities was ended, as it did not help the school "raise its standards" (p.4). It thus becomes evident that the discourse on testing diverts attention from how schools are denying an equal education to poor and minority children. As Ayers has commented, the imposition of standards that would be measured through tests have actually become an avenue for the maintenance of inequity (2000).

Further, critiques have also shown how empty the logic behind the imposition of testing has been: tests supposedly represent the epitome of scientific progress, to measure the progress of children and schools and as such seem to be an affirmation of science and reason. Yet, the discourse that would support testing fails to meet this criteria. Kornhaber and Orfield (2001) have explored the major reasons that they see as particularly influential in dictating public policy on testing: (1) testing enhances

economic productivity; (2) testing motivates students; and (3) testing improves teaching and learning.

Kornhaber and Orfield present evidence that dispels all three of those assumptions. As they point out, the U.S. economy has done better than other European economies, even though test scores of U.S. students have been lower. Furthermore, even if one were to concede that these scores were predictors of future behavior, the connection between cognitive skills and economic productivity (Levin, 2001) is not particularly evident. As Kornhaber and Orfield point out, test scores have not shown to be significant predictors of the kinds of qualities that are generally considered essential to job success (initiative, creativity and reliability to name a few). Postcolonial scholars such as Ferguson (2005) have also commented on how discourses on economic productivity have changed over the years. Around the time of the "end of the empire" (approximately around 1945, and the end of the Second World War), modernization theories began to set forward the idea that the more Western ideas, like industrial economy and a reliance on technology, spread across the world, the more likely the poor would overcome their poverty and participate more fully in the benefits of modernity. However, "globalization" as it is optimistically referred to has not always worked that way. For many people, modernization has not brought benefits, but only the hollow knowledge that desired goods exist and are available but not to them (Mbembe, 2002), which can result in violent efforts to seize what is desired. In such a situation, those who enjoy privileges often resort to policing their privileges: borders, walls and technologies of social exclusion become more and more common. This resonates with the concerns of many critics of standardized testing, who see it as a technology of social exclusion: a system designed to legitimate exclusion. (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Pena, in press).

The second major assumptions behind the wide scale imposition of testing is that it motivates students to do better. As Kornhaber and Orfield have commented "common wisdom, as well as behavioral psychology, holds that normal thinking beings strive to gain rewards and avoid painful consequences" (p. 7). According to Madaus and Clarke (2001) motivation is such a complex phenomena that making generalizations about it is an extremely risky process. Scholars such as Fordham and Ogbu (1986) have found that cultural factors play an extremely significant role in the area of motivation.

The final assumption, that tests improve teaching and learning, is also considered by Kornhaber and Orfield to be fallacious, as neither teaching nor learning are areas that necessarily operate in a rational and constructive way (p. 9). Some of the evidence in fact contradicts it quite strongly, such as McNeil and Valenzuela's (2001) study of the impact of

the standardized test, the TAAS, in Texas. They found that especially for poor and minority children, the curriculum ended up being more limited. All teachers in schools who served these populations, regardless of their subject matter expertise, were expected to drill these students on math, reading and writing. Another major impact was that educational expenditures were significantly impacted as "scarce instructional dollars" were diverted from enhancing the curriculum to test preparation materials and other such test related items. The Harvard Civil Rights Project most recent report on the standardized testing mandated by NCLB had similar findings: 4 years after the law was enacted, their study found that achievement levels for all children had remained static, or, if anything, had deteriorated slightly. There has been no closure of racial gaps in achievement. Despite the fact that the federal government is providing 412 million dollars a year towards testing, many states find that they still have to divert additional funding each year to meet the testing requirements imposed on them (Lee, 2006). The same study also found that in low performing schools, instruction declined in areas that were not tested and that it was difficult to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. Furthermore, with an increased emphasis on testing, the curriculum tended to suffer, as "there often is a tendency to move into highly formulaic and rigidly programmed curriculum, boring to both students and teachers, and, worse yet, to spend time not on teaching their subjects but on drilling on test-taking strategies" (Lee, 2006, p. 7).

Examining Standardized Tests for Cultural Images

In light of all the above concerns, this study undertook a detailed content analysis of the reading passages that appeared on multiple state standardized tests, between 2000 and 2004. Given the idea that standardized tests reflect imperialist agendas of controlling life paths and limiting human possibility, it was considered critical to examine the actual tests themselves in detail, with a particular focus on the kinds of cultural images that are being put forth by the tests. From an early childhood point of view this is critical. Popular wisdom might suggest that, especially in the third and fourth grade, children are too young to pay attention to meta-messages. To them, it is argued, a reading passage is simply a reading passage and they don't really pay attention to its content or images. Numerous research studies (Tobin, 2002) and decades of work in early childhood, reconceptualist and otherwise, have forcefully contradicted this misconception (Cannella, 1997; Burman, 1994). This study found that not only have imperialist ideologies created colonizing structures such as standardized testing to regulate children's lives, but their

impact is being enhanced through the racially and culturally biased materials that are part of those tests. The tests themselves are held up to children as a gold standard: something they must succeed on, for their own sakes. In this context, to be presented with racist and colonialist messages is of all the more concern.

Method

A qualitative content analysis was conducted of 94 reading passages taken from the 3rd and 4th grade standardized tests of 11 states in the United States. Table 1 shows which state tests were included, for what grade level and from what year.

This study was particularly concerned with the interpretation of what Hodder (2000) calls "mute evidence" or written texts and artifacts. Although such mute evidence lacks the possibility of interaction with its creator, and consequently the insight of emic perspectives, it does possess the advantage of being more easily available and of being more "detached" from the contexts in which it was created. Furthermore the very muteness of the evidence can cause the interpreter to engage in what Hodder calls self-reappraisal. Furthermore, as Hodder points out, this form of research also does away in many cases with the need for a member check.

Table 1. States From Which Tests Were Examined.

State	Grade	Year
Maine	4	2002
Virginia	3	2000
Virginia	3	2003
Virginia	3	2002
Massachusetts	3	2003
Massachusetts	3	2002
New York	3	2001
Wyoming	4	2003
Georgia	4	2000
Texas (TAKS)	4	2003
Texas (TAKS)	3	2003
Texas (TAAS)	3,4	2002
Arkansas	4	2003
Ohio	4	2003
Ohio	4	2002
Ohio	4	2002 (summer)
South Carolina	3, 4	No year given
Pennsylvania	3	2003
Pennsylvania	3	2004

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have distinguished between documents and records: documents are seen as having been created for personal rather than official reasons with the opposite holding true for records. As they point out documents may require more contextualized interpretations, given the nature of the situations under which they were created whereas records "may have local uses that become very distant from officially sanctioned meanings" (Hodder, 2003, p. 156). The data analyzed in this study is considered as records, given that they are created specifically for a formal purpose. One of the disadvantages of records that Hodder points out is that access to them can be restricted by laws regarding privacy and confidentiality. This was a major issue that impacted the data included in this study, since many states, for multiple reasons, do not release the standardized tests that they develop. For a full discussion of the issues surrounding this issue, see Ohanian (2002). Some states such as Texas, Georgia, and Virginia release all or most of the tests that children have taken in previous years and post them on their websites. Other states release only what they call "sample released test items" that are just a few of the items that have appeared on the state standardized tests. Thus the data for this study was collected through exhaustive searching of state department of education websites for both full and partial releases of test items. A major factor therefore that limited the data included in this study was the willingness of the state that created the test to make it available to the public. A total of 94 passages were collected for analysis.

A content analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Silverman, 2004) was performed upon the data collected, which is defined by Silverman as a method in which "researchers establish a set of categories and count the number of instances that fell into that category." Atkinson and Coffey (1995) comment on a necessary caution to be kept in mind when performing such content analyses: even though data such as records are mute evidence, they are not "transparent representations of organizational routines" but continue to be "social facts" that are "produced, shared and used in socially organized ways." Thus the attempt in this paper is to try and relate them the selected reading passages to their context, and to ask such questions such as what ideologies do the inclusion of these passages reflect and what messages does it give children to read a particular passage in the high pressure situation of taking the state standardized test.

Once the data had been collected it was sorted into what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call units. The unitizing of data began with the first sample passage and as more and more samples were collected, they were similarly unitized. Given that the data came in a sense from different sources (complete released tests and sample items) each reading passage

and the questions that accompanied it were treated as one unit. As data accumulated, these passages were sorted into "like piles" or the initial categories. As more and more data accumulated, the data were sorted and re-sorted. Thus categories emerged, were discarded, and re-emerged from the data.

Emergent Patterns

The 94 reading passages were characterized as either fiction, non-fiction or poetry. Following is a thumbnail sketch of how diversity is portrayed in these passages:

Type of item	Fiction	Non fiction	Poetry
Total Number	41	42	11
Items that include perspectives of people of color	16	6	0

As even the most cursory glance would indicate, there are obviously problems with issues of under and skewed representation in these passages. Other patterns that emerged from analyzing the data included: the treatment of difference, the creation of the "other" as menace and themes of rescue and salvation.

Difference

Many postcolonial scholars believe that a questioning of the "different" categories that have been used to describe people is a fundamental aspect of postcolonial theory. As Austin-Broos (1998) states:

> Difference is constructed rather than given. There is no simply natural differentiation of peoples in the world. Colonialism itself is the structuring of difference rather than simply a political act realised on a pre-given cultural field....The proposal is to 'interrogate' difference rather than to gaze Herder-like at the plenitude of God's creation, at the ontological range of humanity.

Baumann elaborates on this idea, commenting that modern intellect's claims to superiority come from its power to define and differentiate (quoted in Gandhi, 1998, p.40). Thus to simply accept that the world is made up of "different" kinds of people, is in some ways to accept the logic of colonialism. Said (1993) has also commented upon this idea, pointing out the problems with the fact that many postcolonial nations have come to accept this notion of difference, claiming it as a sign of their own uniqueness. According to Said, this results in a form of reactionary politics, in which difference is articulated in what Adorno calls "negative

dialectics": an essentially defensive definition of culture. This kind of dialectics ultimately only tends to underscore the "binary oppositions and hierarchies" of colonial discourse (quoted in Gandhi, 1998, p. 109).

Stoler and Cooper (1997) offer an insightful analysis of the concept of difference, pointing out how rigid forms of social division, even when portrayed and constructed as monolithic and omnipotent, have always contained undercurrents of intermingling and reexamination. Furthermore, competing strategies for acquiring and maintaining power are a part of the discourse of defining difference. This is not to underestimate the power of those categories themselves, as they have been forces that have allowed forms of violence, and that have opened and closed possibilities in areas such as marriage, housing and education. Ultimately however, Stoler and Cooper believe, that it is the questioning of difference that confounded formal colonization, by positioning "contestation over the very categories of ruler and ruled at the heart of colonial politics" (p. 6). Recent work in postcolonial theory has made the point that difference is something that colonial empires had to work hard to define and maintain: this opens up the dialogue for how people who function within the categories could turn them around.

Naming Difference. In light of such perspectives on difference, it is interesting to note how it is portrayed in standardized test reading passages. One of the most striking features is that difference is not merely accepted, it is specifically named, almost as though it were a priority to make sure that it could not escape a child's attention. Out of the 16 fictional passages that included the perspectives of people of color, 5 of the passages included a sub-title that explicitly named their origin. For example, a story about a spider and turtle was named "a West African tale" (Virginia, 2003) and another story about a turtle flying south for the winter was named "a Sioux legend" (Wyoming, 2003). It was interesting that in the fictional passages that seemed to be about Euro-American characters, such naming was not considered necessary. For example, a story about a wolf and a heron which was taken from Aesop's fables was not labeled according to its origin (Ohio, 2003) although the content of the passages was very similar in that they were all about animals. On a side note, all five of the passages that were explicitly identified as "non-European" were about animals.

Exoticizing Difference. Another aspect in which many of the passages included in this study were remarkably different was in their depiction of the activities that the children engaged in. Difference was made obvious by depiction: the actions that the children described in the passages were engaged in seem to segregate themselves across ethnic lines.

Of the 16 fictional passages that included the perspectives of people of color, 10 of them were about children doing various things. The activities that the children were described as doing included the following:

Helping a girl from the wagon train (Texas, 2002)
Gathering eggs (Virginia, 2003)
Finding a special meeting place with friends (Texas, 2002)
Visiting China (Texas 2001) and going to the market there (Texas 2001)
Visiting Native American grandparents in Arizona, eating dinner, and making pottery (Texas 2003)
Planning to play soccer (Texas 2002)
Going to the museum and wishing one could be a paleontologist when grown up (Texas 2003)
Dancing a Mexican folk dance (Ohio, 2003)
Playing Double Dutch jump rope (Ohio, 2003)
Playing traditional African drums (Texas 2003)

Out of the 25 fictional items that represented Euro-American perspectives, 19 of them described children as engaging in various activities. These activities included:

Asking questions about family history (South Carolina, 2003)
Working on the family ranch (Texas 2003)
Growing peanuts in Georgia (Massachusetts, 2002)
Taking care of chickens on the farm (Texas, 2002)
Living on a farm in Texas and helping father get home safely in a dust storm (Texas 2001)
Learning about nutrition (Georgia, 2000)
Making ice cream (Texas 2001)
Planning to take a weekend class on gardening (Texas 2001)
Helping grandfather learn to read (Arkansas, 2003)
Taking care of and playing with pets (Texas 2001, 2002)
Picking blackberries (Kentucky 2004)
Cleaning a neighbor's garage (Ohio, 2002)
Playing the piano and playing baseball (Texas 2001)
Searching for sea turtle nests (Texas 2002)
Visiting a TV station (Texas 2002)
Having a picnic (Virginia 2000)
Going to the airport (Texas 2002)

People of color tended to be shown engaged in exotic activities such as playing the tribal drums while half naked or dancing folk dances in brightly colored costumes whereas Euro-American children engage in "regular" activities such as playing with their pets. When people of color go somewhere, it is to exotic destinations such as China and a Native American village, "regular" people go to places such as the airport or to Florida to look for sea turtles.

The Menacing Other

As was mentioned above, scholars such as Feldman have suggested that along with a war on terror, the United States is also engaged in what he has termed "securocratic wars of public safety," the underlying message of which is that perfect "liberal" democracies are threatened by dangers which are invisible and infiltrating. Feldman outlines several strategies being employed in these wars; one of these strategies is what he calls a "police concept of history." Such an idea of history rewrites or perhaps remaps the world into secure idealized and orderly spaces, which are constantly threatened by their dichotomous other, the improper and the transgressive. In such a framework, human life is characterized by an orderly and visible "distribution of functions, profiles and positions within a society" (p. 333). Another characteristic of such a society is that the non-event is what is considered normal, since non-events imply that functions have been properly assigned to people and that everyone is in their assigned place (ibid). Always lurking at the edge of these spaces however, is the menacing other: spaces with disorderly inhabitants (both animal and human) and unruly happenings. Such spaces, it is assumed, require policing, and control by civilized outsiders. The menace, however, is portrayed in such a way as to make it apparent, that it can never fully be contained or apprehended: thus constant surveillance is required and new technologies of control must always be under development.

The reading passages on many of the state standardized tests reflect these imperialist ideologies, as is evident from some of the examples given below. Perhaps most striking is a passage about the driver ants of Africa, who are described as being the "most famous fighters" of all ants and further more:

> Most ants live in one place: but the driver ants are almost always on the move. They eat every insect and bird and small animal they can find. They will eat large animals and people who cannot get away. Even elephants run from an army of terrible driver ants. The last sentence of the passage on ants reads: "So if you have a picnic in Africa, do not worry about these ants eating your sandwiches. Worry about them eating you" (ibid). (Ohio, 2002 , selection taken form "Insects do the Strangest Things" by Leonora and Arthur Hornblow)

Another passage from the Texas 2002 test for 4th grade is a fictional account of a child named Elizabeth, who is traveling west on a wagon train in 1856. When the train stops, Elizabeth's rooster goes missing and Elizabeth goes to look for him. Elizabeth meets a Native American girl named Sisika who helps her look for the rooster. When they find the rooster, it is eating crickets and Sisika tells Elizabeth that crickets are tasty, "my mother dries them and we make delicious cricket soup." Here

too the image of the other is one who does not operate within the borders of the normal.

The only non-fictional passage on Native Americans (although some of the passages about Euro-American do mention Native Americans as secondary characters) is also interesting. The passage is from the Massachusetts test of Spring 2002 and is titled "Planting and Tending Crops." The first sentence of the summary of the passage that is given reads: "Learning to farm in North America took the Native Americans many years." The implications of this sentence seem quite remarkable, that in many years, Native Americans were still "learning" how to farm. It is thus understood that over thousands of years, as the passage states, these people were in a state of learning, and had never mastered this technique. The passage also goes on to give details about the kinds of tools that the Native Americans used to farm: shells, the bone of a shoulder blade of a buffalo and smoothed stone blades. The image is of prehistoric people who never acquired the sophistication to farm "properly." Many of the passages about Euro-Americans farming and ranching and even children in those passages were portrayed as resourceful individuals In contrast, a passage about Daniel Boone from the South Carolina 2003 tests, talks about how Daniel had some "exciting experiences" with Native Americans who came to "respect his skills as a hunter and woodsman. The contrast between the orderly spaces of the Euro Americans where people do such ordinary every day activities as play the piano or make icecream, and the unruly worlds outside those boundaries (or within them before they were civilized) is evident.

Images of normal spaces are also constructed through the inclusion of details. One of the most remarkable features that set apart passages about European Americans from people of color was in the way that details were either used or omitted to describe people and events. Precise details are given about one group and omitted about the other. As the data in the table indicates, there are remarkably few passages about people of color at all. The ones that do exist are distinct in that they have far fewer details (such as specific dates and places). Passages about Euro-Americans and their environments on the other hand are richly populated with details.

In at least three non fictional passages about people of color details that could easily have been included were omitted. For example, the description of George Washington Carver does not include dates about when he was born (even though it is about his childhood). In contrast passages about other people like Benjamin Franklin, and Daniel Boone specifically mention the dates of their birth. Furthermore, the passage about Carver is limited to a very brief description of how he had to struggle to go to school and makes no mention of his accomplishments in later life.

The passage about driver ants in Africa is also remarkable for its lack of detail. Most strikingly, it does not mention in which parts of Africa these ants are to be found. The sentence quoted earlier in fact talks about the dangers of having a picnic in Africa, leaving the impression that the entire continent is over run with these ants. The other passages about living creatures and their habitats that are found in the Western world include many more details (kinds of squirrels, how big spiders can be, what to do if you found a gecko in your house).

Another passage about people of color that describes the environment is the one on Native American farming. This passage too does not talk about specifics (dates and times are not mentioned except to say that it took the Native Americans thousands of years to learn how to farm). It does not mention specific states, though reference is made to geographic regions. In contrast, descriptions of the environment in passages about Euro Americans and their environments are full of details. For example, on the New York 3rd grade test of 2001, a passage describes the "Appalachian Trail": where the trail begins (Maine) and where it ends (Georgia), how long it is (2,167 miles), how much of it is in New York State (88.8 miles), how many steps one will probably take per mile (2,300). Other passages are similarly full of details. The emphasis in these passages seems in fact to be on details: historical details about cowboy boots (Texas 2001), how much garbage is produced in the United States every year (New York, 2001).

The only passages about people of color that did include specific details were those about Mae Jennison, the first female African American astronaut, and the first African American polar explorers, Matthew Henson and Garrett Morgan. Two of these passages, the ones about Henson and Jemison, do have actual photographs of the people but the passages about George Washington Carver and Garrett Morgan have sketches. Although there are passages about Euro-Americans that use sketches instead of photographs (example, Jim Henson the creator of the Muppets and Jane Goodall) there are passages that do include photographs such a picture of President Roosevelt in 1903. Photographs of both George Washington Carver and Garrett Morgan are easily available. The underlying message thus seemed to be that people of color (unless they live in the United States and are engaged in the kinds of activities that are valued by the dominant culture) do not operate within the same dimensions of normalcy. Life outside the west is primitive, timeless and without specific locations, and by implication populated by hulking and dangerous others, who can threaten the safe spaces "we" live in.

Rescue Me

Pena (in press) has characterized NCLB and the discourses associ-

ated with its creation and implementation, as technologies which construct "children for the purpose of saving them" (p. 265). The language of "saving" children is reflected in multiple aspects of the legislation. Children are defined as a collective population, who are at a distance from desired levels of school performance. They also need saving from being trapped in schools that are not performing up to par. According to Pena many major features of NCLB are couched in the language of salvation and redemption: accountability, for example has traditionally had a qualitative moral dimension, traceable back to the work of Locke in 1690. Other mainstays of the act, such as ideas about choice and flexibility, also carry such connotations. The version of salvation preached by NCLB is geared towards "fast tracking children to the final state of adulthood"; acquiring the right kind of reading and math skills will, it would appear, inescapably prepare children to become the right kind of citizen/consumers. Children, as Pena points out, must perform to receive this salvation and in the specified ways. The emphasis on testing and re-testing is likened by Pena to the insistence that there must be constant vigilance to stay in a state of grace. Even the title, no child left behind, according to Pena invokes images of being saved.

Interestingly, this metaphor of being saved or rescued seems to carry over into the reading passages that appear on the state standardized tests. The stories on the tests that were mostly about European characters seemed to have more things happen, and the characters were portrayed as being the ones who seemed to solve problems in resourceful ways whereas in the stories about people of color, more descriptions were included about what they were doing and they were rarely shown as either being presented with difficult situations or as finding solutions to them. They were portrayed as waiting around for help or change to come.

Out of the 25 fictional passages that were identified as being mostly about Euro-Americans, 10 out of the passages were short stories about children being resourceful and coming up with solutions to problems that they encountered. For example, on the 2001 Texas 4th grade test, a child called Annie is seen trying to figure out a way in which to help her father come home in a dust storm. Annie thinks her father will be able to follow the fence around their land to get him close to home but worries that he will not be able to find the way from there to the front door. She then comes up with the idea to tie a rope from the door to the fence, which ends up helping her father come safely home. Another example includes a boy whose grandfather never learned to read. The boy then finds help for his grandfather, who ends up learning to read (Arkansas, 2003). Only one passage showed what happened when rules were broken (a child who is

told not to enter the hen house does so and ends up letting all the chickens out. Her father helps her put them back inside)

In contrast to these resourceful messages about Euro-Americans, out of the 16 passages that were about people of color, only 2 of them showed children as being able to find solutions to problems. In one of the stories a child named Kara Salazar is sent to gather eggs, but discovers that her basket has a hole in it. She ends up using her sweatshirt to line the basket so that the eggs do not fall out (Virginia, 2003). In the other story that shows a person of color acting resourcefully, three girls named Robin, Carmen and LaShonda, who seem from the illustration to be White, Hispanic and Black want to find a special meeting place for their group called Friends Forever (Texas, 2003). Carmen is the one who comes up with the idea of having a meeting place. After considering various alternatives, something Robin says gives LaShonda the idea that they could use a patch of sunflowers as that place.

In many of the other stories about children of color, the children are mostly shown as passive beings, to whom life happens. Many of the stories are concerned with descriptions rather than events. Two of the passages describe children returning to their origins so to speak: a child called Mei Lin, who had lived in Texas all her life goes to visit her grandmother in China (Texas 2001) and an unnamed child goes back to Arizona to visit his Native American grandparents in a Hopi village. Both these passages contain lots of details about the physical things (how a mesa looks, what the houses are like, shopping in the market for vegetables, what they ate for dinner), but do not show the children engaging in purposeful actions. In another passage, a child called Miata is portrayed as participating in a Mexican folk dance. This passage is taken from a children's book called "The Skirt" by Gary Soto. A summary of the book appears at the head of the page and says that Miata forgets her special skirt on the school bus and tries to get it back. However the actual passage reproduced in the test is more concerned with a physical description of the pretty colors of the skirt and how it looked when Miata twirled wearing it (Ohio, 2003). Another passage is about the driver of an 18 wheeler named Tameka. The passage consists entirely of descriptions, with a few details thrown in to give it the semblance of a story. It remains however a story in which nothing happens, just descriptions: of the truck itself, of the log that Tameka must keep about what she is doing , of the dashboard of the truck and of a truck stop she visits along the way (Virginia, 2003). Similarly, on the Texas 2003 test for 4th grade, there is a story about a child called Lisa Vasquez who visits a museum of natural history. The story is mostly composed of details about the dinosaur bones that Lisa sees there. The

characters thus appear to lack agency, or power, and seem to be waiting to be given directions as to what to do.

Final Thoughts

As all of these analyses indicate, a distinct qualitative difference does appear between the ways in which European Americans and people of color are portrayed on state standardized tests. One group tends to be created as "normal," engaging in routine every day activities. The other is created as "different" and exotic, while at the same time less resourceful and more passive: waiting for change to come. These kinds of images resonate with the cautions about domestic public policies in the United States, for this is the view of difference that is being exported around the world. There is a growing body of research that indicates that there are multiple ways in which standardized tests are failing children and schools. The analyses presented in this paper support that idea, but would also caution that the effects do not stop there. To an extent, standardized tests are a tiny encapsulated version of views about the world and human beings that are being imposed around the globe.

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