

Implications of the Film *Stand and Deliver*: Critical Pedagogy, Hegemonic Ideologies and High-stakes Standardized Testing

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Abstract

In this paper, first the author suggests that teachers may incorporate films in the curriculum for a pedagogical practice of cultural studies to assist students in critically examining and confronting cultural politics. The author also points to the Hollywood movie *Stand and Deliver* as an example to explore hegemonic mechanisms operated in the film. Moreover, the problems of high-stakes standardized testing promoted by dominant groups as assessment for educational accountability in the film and in contemporary public education in the US are pointed out. The implementation of high-stakes standardized testing creates higher levels of competition and a tracking system, imposing a great pressure on students and teachers. The current education policies in the US lead to the privatization of the public school, which undermines the basic foundations of democratic public life. The author finally concludes that a pedagogy of hope and resistance to standardized testing should challenge dominant ideologies in education, as well as in films. More importantly, public education should prepare students for transforming social inequality and injustice in a democratic system.

Keywords: Critical Pedagogy, Educational Accountability, High-stakes
Standardized Testing, Hegemonic Ideologies

Introduction: Film as Pedagogy and Inquiry

Films both entertain and educate, offering sources not only of joy but also of knowledge and information. It is widely assumed, typically from the aesthetic dimension, that films, Hollywood movies in particular, mainly provide their viewers visual pleasure and happiness, as well as inviting them to make affective investments. However, more than just a visual aesthetics, films, a major element of societal multicultural education, can be perceived from the pedagogical dimension that they function as an impelling teaching machine, exercising enormous power to influence the ways mass audiences think, talk, feel, behave and desire.

Nowadays, in a media saturated epoch, films have become a prevailing medium in popular and global culture through which people communicate to each other across nations. Higgins(1991)has stated that films “should be explored as a dynamic method of communication with a variety of application: between persons or groups; as a means of individual and collective social, cultural, and artistic expression; and as a pedagogical device to encourage critical thought” (p.18) In reality, aside from entertaining, films also serve as a potent form of public pedagogy as well as a social/cultural text that narrates stories of different groups of people, opening up space for us to problematicize the representations in the film and to address questions of the dominant modes of film production.

In what follows, first, the author explores critical pedagogy as a tool to challenge cultural politics in films. Then, she discusses the ways in which hegemonic mechanisms are exercised in the Hollywood movie *Stand and Deliver*. Subsequently, the author points out the problems of high-stakes standardized testing. Finally, she concludes that a pedagogy of hope and resistance to standardized testing should challenge dominant ideologies in education, as well as in films; and public education should prepare students for transforming social inequality and injustice in this democratic and free land.

Critical Pedagogy of Representations in Films: Cultural Studies in Social Agency, Citizenship and Democracy

Films disseminate particular ideologies and values; they disseminate information,

images, and ideas concerning race, ethnicity, culture, and foreignness. Giroux (2002) has postulated that films yield images, ideas, and ideologies that shape both individual and national identities. Contemporary popular films intimate hegemonic mechanisms in favor of existing power relations. Thus, with their political nature, films are alternative educational texts for cultural studies suggesting possibilities for inquiry and critical analysis about representational politics. Through a critical perspective, we not only view a film but we see through the film. In addition to critically reading the ideologies in films, we can analyze films subversively for the various assumptions underlying the production values of the dominant groups (e.g., neo-conservatives, neo-liberals). Therefore, by critically scrutinizing films, we gain new ways of seeing power and capital, gender and class, race and ethnicity in them; we also make the invisible cultural politics visible, as well as examine democracy in reality. As Giroux (1997) has pointedly remarked, “a critical pedagogy of representations should ascertain how certain meanings under particular historical conditions become more legitimate as representations of reality and take on the force of common sense assumptions shaping a broader set of discourses and social configurations at work in the dominant social order” (p. 30).

To depoliticize the political issues and to propagandize their ideologies, as well as to secure their power, dominant groups transmit their values and beliefs through political, social, and cultural consolidation rather than through overt political control. In popular films, the dominant power relations of race, class, gender, and sexual preference are adroitly delivered to the viewer. Hollywood films (controlled by few corporations that perform great power in production, distribution and circulation of movies in the USA and abroad), therefore, have become one of the media through which the values and beliefs of the dominant groups are reproduced. In actuality, the dominant ideologies mesh very well into corporations' capitalism through the media's manipulation of images and symbols. Because contemporary Hollywood films largely reinforce rather than challenge dominant ideologies, the dominant neo-conservative and neo-liberal beliefs and values systems, therefore, are embedded in the film narrative. Consequently, marginalized voices remain unheard.

The traditional notion and deeply held assumption of film as a visual aesthetics exclude the function of the contemporary entertainment media as a pedagogical mechanism. In reality, films serve as a bridge to help students traditionally alienated by the canonical texts they confront in the “standard” curriculum to conquer and gain

a critical understanding of those texts (Morrell, 2000). Moreover, in a critical pedagogy of media classroom, teachers can incorporate films in the curriculum for a pedagogical practice of cultural studies to assist students in critically examining and confronting cultural politics and understanding that values do not float free of their social, political, and historical contexts. As Denski (1991) suggests, “through a historical understanding of human political struggle, critical educators recognize the political dimensions of the classroom and work to create an environment in which the transformation of consciousness, the new formations of self, may occur” (p.13). To refute contemporary films theory that works to defamiliarize dominant modes of representation, Denski (1991) has suggested that the goal of a critical pedagogy of media classroom is to challenge the current entertainment media as “hegemonic mechanisms in support of existing power relations, in which various voices are either privileged or silenced” (p. 3), and “a critical conceptualization of language, not as a value-free neutral vehicle for the expression of objective thought, but as interwoven with the preexistent values in which it is historically and culturally situated”(p.11). In a classroom of critical pedagogy through films, students are empowered to perceive the hidden meaning and to interrogate, deconstruct, disrupt and interrupt both the cultural mechanisms of hegemony in the film and a broader public discourse that reproduces dominant ideologies. A critical pedagogy of media classroom is not only an individual site of instruction, but a site of cultural struggle in which various sociological and ideological struggles are continually being played out.

Traditionally, students have been viewed as passive learners and teachers as value-neutral knowledge-deliverers. Students are imparted subject-based/deskilled knowledge rather than concerns about greater social issues of injustice and inequity. This transmission model of pedagogy not only elides the role of schooling in preparing students as social agents to engage in democratic public life, but also elides the roles of teachers and students as “active participants” in social construction rather than “chroniclers of history and social change or recipients of culture” (Giroux, 1994, p.279). Dominant groups have removed cultural and political dimensions of schooling; pedagogy, therefore, is reduced only to referring to the process by which students are provided with a set of cognitive skills. Hence, schools have become major sites for the reproduction and maintenance of dominant beliefs and values. Consequently, marginalized individuals and groups and their voices have always been muffled, as well as making the substance of democracy meaningless. Giroux (2002) has made a

succinct interpretation of the entity of critical pedagogy:

[Critical pedagogy] provides the conditions for a set of ideological and social relations which engender diverse possibilities for students to produce rather than simply acquire knowledge, to be self-critical about both the positions they describe and the locations from which they speak, and to make explicit the attempt to produce the conditions necessary for either the existing society or a new and more democratic social order (p.78).

Giroux (1994) reminds us that “teaching can only be understood through considerations of history, politics, power, and culture” (p. 280). Teachers who work within a cultural studies framework may want to seriously reexamine pedagogy from historical and political perspectives. Is the goal of pedagogy to prepare students as future cadres of bourgeois order or as critical thinkers, creative problem solvers and active social participants who hold self-criticism and commitment to transforming existing social and political problems for social justice in a democratic system? Moreover, teachers may also want to rethink if school is the site for transmission /reproduction of fragmented knowledge or a place with goals and visions for individual growth, as well as social transformation of those social relations that construct the various cultural sites of oppression and struggle. In a critical pedagogy of media classroom, through the process of thinking, discussion, writing, debate, perspectives exchange, students are enabled to examine critically the traditional canonical texts and mechanisms, as well as to embrace compassion and justice instead of nihilism and cynicism in the preparation of a democratic and justice society.

In general, the implementation of a critical pedagogy in the curriculum taps the ethical and moral dimensions of teaching to prepare students as critical thinkers with compassion and sense of justice, as well as to link schooling to a transformative vision of the future; critical pedagogy in essence is a cultural practice with ongoing struggles over power in the contemporary social system. To refute the traditional notion of pedagogy as transmission and schooling as a conservative force for social and cultural reproduction, Giroux (2002) has continued to point out that pedagogy should have “progressive goals of creating the conditions for critical agency, ethical accountability, and the obligations of democratic public life” (p. 83). McLaren (1988) has also reasserted that “the major objective of critical pedagogy is to empower students to intervene in their own self-formation and to transform the oppressive features of the wider society that make such an intervention necessary”

(Giroux, 1988, p.xi). A critical pedagogy of media classroom not only offers students tremendous opportunities for cultural practice but also prepares them as active critical social agents to transform existing inequalities and injustice.

Seeing through the Movie: Hegemonic Mechanisms in *Stand and Deliver*

Stand and Deliver, a 103-minute film, directed by Ramon Menendez, written by Ramon Menendez and Tom Musca, and presented by Warner Brothers in 1982, takes place at Garfield High in East Los Angeles. In the first few scenes of the film, viewers vividly see the school landscape made up of crumbling buildings, chaotic classrooms, unruly students and bureaucratic faculty members and staff, as well as images of disorder, chaos and fear about Latino/Latina youth. Starring Edward James Olmos as newly hired Latino math teacher Jaime Escalante, who gave up a promising job in a high-tech computer company to fulfill his dream of being an educator, *Stand and Deliver* in the very beginning sets out to present an image of a hero who embraces courage, determination and ideals. Jamie Escalante becomes a savior who overcomes difficulties to cajole, push, threaten and inspire 18 disadvantaged high-school Latino/Latina youth to do advanced calculus in order to pass the National Advanced Placement Calculus Exam. In so doing, the energetic teacher-hero helps secure for barrio students advanced placement status in college, which is seen as an impossible mission by the female department head. Simply put, the film attempts to promote an ideological message implying that individual effort has merit.

It is crucial to point out that *Stand and Deliver* needs to be placed in a historical and political context for a deeper understanding how the film mirrors neo-liberal and neo-conservative values and beliefs. The production year of *Stand and Deliver* (1982) was in the era of the New Right movement of the dominant groups. That the film glorifies people who successfully resist oppression through individual initiative is congruent with dominant beliefs in which individual effort is preferable to collective action/struggle in that the latter suggests mobilization of universal agents that might threaten the dominant powers. Films like *Stand and Deliver* have become very important vehicles for the ruling class, white supremacist capitalist heterosexual patriarchal elites, to manipulate cultural politics by using the symbolic and metaphoric forms of discourse in texts of the public culture (i.e., films) to “displace serious political issues to the realm of the aesthetic and the personal” (Giroux, 2002, p 75). It

is interesting to scrutinize Jaime Escalante's teaching credo: "You are the true dreamers ...and dreams accomplish wonderful things." His words seem to be a duplicated copy of what we have long been told: that, as long as you work hard enough, your dreams will come true because you live in the land of democracy and freedom. Nevertheless, in actuality the "American dream" has been experienced only by very few individuals. If there are no resources and collective efforts in support of youth from working-class families, such as Latino/Latina youth in the film, is it fact or fantasy that an individual can fight alone against larger social forces (e.g., the Educational Testing Service at Princeton) or climb upward on the socioeconomic ladder to success?

Furthermore, *Stand and Deliver* tactfully manipulates racial politics about youth, implying that Latino/Latina students make school a place of disorder, violence and chaos, as well as not being capable of doing math or having good results in standardized testing. The struggles of youth are presented, but the film has nothing to say about the historical, economic, and political factors that cause these phenomena to occur. Both in the film and in reality, youth of color or youth from working-class families have limited access to resources and little financial support from their low-income families. Thus, quality educational experiences are unknown to them. In addition, the curriculum designed by dominant groups leave no room for these youth to fit in; math and science in particular are subjects irrelevant to their daily experiences. To prepare for standardized testing is another problem for these youth. They cannot afford simulated tests for extensive practice in identifying and preparing for items likely to be on the real standardized test. In addition, they are not familiar with the test questions, which contain significant cultural bias against minority students and are mainly designed for the middle- or upper-class students by dominant groups.

Stand and Deliver overtly presents a moral crisis when it explores the racism evinced by the larger educational community (the Educational Testing Service at Princeton) in the face of unprecedented test-score success of the impoverished Chicana and Chicano students. Yet, the racism is not challenged. While the exploration of the issue of racism is a positive feature of the film and should not be ignored, however, covertly, the film pedagogically proposes political implication that conforming to the larger social formation is creditable over challenging it. With the failure of striving alone against ETS members, the energetic teacher-hero again

inspires *ganas* (desire to learn) in his students to retake the A.P. calculus exam and subsequently all 18 students pass the exam. *Stand and Deliver* reveals to its viewers that conformity is seen as a virtue and, as a result of this virtue, both the protagonist earns vindication for his individual endeavors and heroic deed and the 18 Latino/Latina youth earn back their probity by retaking the exam.

When placed under scrutiny, the hidden pedagogical mechanism exercised in *Stand and Deliver* implying the notion of compliance with and faith in authority is manifest. In the film, the legitimated authority of ETS seems unchallenged and the decision by this corporation about the 18 Latino/Latina youths' fate that they had to retake the AP calculus exam seems unquestionable. Although facing huge humiliation of being suspected of cheating on exam, these 18 youth compromised with ETS in order to prove their innocence. The film suggests the hidden dominant ideological assumption that conformity rather than resistance is the right path to survival. Moreover, viewers receive a message that these 18 youths, by showing a sense of responsibility and of good citizenship, were rewarded: they passed the exam and qualified for advanced placement in college. However, viewers are also given the hint that, if these kids resisted the request from ETS, they would be punished and ruin their chances of going to college, thus becoming losers in a broad social sense. Seemingly, these youths made a free-will decision without any external forces. However, they actually are left no choice due to their lack of power and access to resources. Ironically, *Stand and Deliver* brings contradiction to the connotation of democracy when it underlines the 18 youths' responsibility but dismisses their agency.

It is also worth noting that gang tensions among Chicano youth on campus are employed as one of the themes in *Stand and Deliver* to reflect the growing culture of violence in American society on the one hand and to inscribe racial coding of violence (the hidden racism echoes the dominant group's panic over urban violence and their assumption that black youths and youths of color are to be blamed) on the other. The dominant ideological implication *Stand and Deliver* imposed on viewers is that these Latino youth are the source rather than victims of the emerging social problems facing the community, as well as the country. However, the film leaves no clues about how social, political, economic and historical factors push Latino/Latina youth to a dead end.

To depoliticize the important political issues concerning Latino/Latina youth's

well-being and to sweetly coat dominant ideologies, *Stand and Deliver* leads its viewers to an aesthetic world. The climax comes when the film invites viewers' affective investment in the scenes as students demonstrate explicit love for their beloved teacher by presenting a plaque. Moreover, editing techniques and camera movement (e.g., close-ups and reverse shots) , as well as a pulsing sound track work like a grammar that functions syntactically to assist in telegraphing the intended affective messages of the scene.

High-stakes Standardized Testing: Problematic Assessment for Educational Accountability

A system of educational reform that employs mandated high-stakes standardized testing has been in place for many years. Generally, as is implied in the film *Stand and Deliver*, standardized testing (multiple-choice formats and focus on basic skills) usually is operated by commercial testing industries, such as ETS in *Stand and Deliver*, and is promoted by its proponents as trustworthy, desirable, scientific, fair, and objective, and it supports educational standards(Airasian, 1987). Moreover, from dominant groups, the rhetoric regarding educational reform stating that America is losing its competitiveness in the world and tough tests are needed to promote world-class standards, as well as that holding teachers responsible for the achievement of their students will result in better education, and that the best data regarding the student's levels of achievement come from standardized achievement tests has become deeply embedded in public discourse (Gratz, 2000). The symbolic language of *A Nation At Risk* released during Reagan's Administration in 1983 can be seen as the landmark of today's preoccupation toward a system of high-stakes standardized testing. Fed by a fear that Americans are falling behind other countries and fueled by international studies of achievement, the need to push students to learn more and faster has become a national obsession.

However, it is a hazardous oversimplification to believe what policy makers have convinced the public, that by setting standards and measuring attainment, they will

spur teachers to teach better and students to learn more. Accountability policies emphasizing standardized achievement testing rest heavily on scientific assumptions that uniform measures can be developed and applied that provide direct evidence of student learning, teacher effectiveness, and school quality (Phelps, 1999). Nevertheless, harmful impacts of high-stakes standardized achievement testing on students, teachers, and schools far more outweigh positive outcomes of it. Fox (2002) has summarized research evidence and made a list of negative effects of the high-stakes standardized testing:

- 1) poorly designed test questions;
- 2) scores highly correlated with race and income and poorly correlated with other standardized tests;
- 3) the curriculum-distorting practice of teaching to the test;
- 4) cheating by teachers and administrators whose jobs or bonuses depend on their students' success;
- 5) testing students on subjects they have never been taught;
- 6) mistakes by testing companies that have already sent thousands of students erroneously low grades;
- 7) unequal treatment in most states, which exempt private and parochial school students from the public-school-only test. (p. 61)

The locus of school control has long shifted from the school itself to external forces; as a result, mandatory standardized achievement testing has become an important tool in the efforts of state governments to regulate and gain control over the process and outcomes of education, as well as of special interest groups created by federal or state laws and judicial decisions to profit from commercial standardized testing (Airasian, 1987). As a result of educational reform that utilizes high-stakes standardized testing, the decision-making power originally held by citizens and local school boards has been replaced by external forces, such as politicians, corporate executives, and industry leaders. Therefore, the democratic ideals of public education have been replaced by the code of corporate rule and schools have turned out to be a market place and testing a tool for the making of comparisons between schools and teachers, as well as competitions among students. Currently, states and school districts throughout the US have developed or are developing accountability systems by implementing standardized testing to spur improvement in student achievement. Subsequently, students are being held accountable by high-stakes standardized testing; teachers and schools in many states are being judged by the scores on these tests. Therefore, high-stakes standardized testing has become a system of educational control by external forces through technology to determine who will graduate, who will be licensed to teach, and which schools will get rewards or sanctions.

Obviously, reform in education by using high-stakes standardized tests has been

driven by political ideology rather than by what actually works in schools and has little to do with improving academic performance or pursuing academic excellence, but a lot to do with politicians' attempts and corporate business (Harris & Longstreet, 1990; Gratz, 2000). Standardized testing is a tremendous profitable project; therefore, corporations and testing business giants continue to promote commercial standardized testing to implement in educational reform. Their proposal rightly meet the attempt of dominant groups for political control by means of technology through public institutions such as the schools. There are two education reformist corporations that have immense influence on states' educational policies: the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), founded in 1988 by Carnegie Corporation protégé Marc Tucker and the New American Schools Development Corporation, formed in 1991 by David Kearns (the deputy secretary of education during the elder Bush's presidential reign); as well as the other two testing industry giants: Harcourt Brace and McGraw-Hill (Suchak, 2001).

According to Gratz (2000), the high-stakes standardized testing implementation policies seem likely to "widen the gap between the educational haves and have-nots" (p.683). As Meaghan, (1995) has reported, the increasingly clear evidence shows that accountability movements have impacts on democracy and educational equity and standardized testing invariably biased against socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic minority groups. Skria (2001) has summarized research findings and suggested that youth of color in particular are:

over identified for special education; tracked in low-level classes; pushed out of the system and labeled dropouts; subject to more and harsher disciplinary actions; provided with less financial resources and substandard facilities; taught by less experienced teachers and more teachers teaching out of their subject fields; segregated based on their home languages; and immersed in negative, toxic school climates (p.15).

It is noteworthy to acknowledge how the New Right intervenes in education policy-making and downplays the well-being of youth of color especially in urban schools. Ball (1990) has written, "There is no way that education policy can simply be read off from the philosophical discourses of the New Right of whatever variety" (p.43). It is necessary to scrutinize and subvert the neo-conservative and neo-liberal elements and intentions that have been animatedly displayed in discourses.

The term of "deficit thinking" created to label minority students in particular is a good example of how dominant groups have successfully mantled their political

attempts to spread hegemonic ideologies in public discourse. After examining the standardized testing of *Texas Assessment of Academic Skills* (TASS), Trueba (2001) concluded that many dominant groups tend to label students who fail in school as 'deficit thinking,' implying that they have internal deficiencies (cognitive, emotional, motivational, social, and cultural) and, therefore, exempt educators from the obligation to teach them successfully. The hegemonic mechanisms are: there is no one to blame for failure but the failures themselves and fault must lie in the culture, the family, or the individual. Moreover, the writings of Skria and Scheurich (2001) as cited by Trueba (2001) suggest that "we construct the 'at risk' concept to include precisely the poor, those who speak other languages or have other culture, and those who look different from mainstream Whites" (p. 334). Furthermore, many educators have developed intervention programs for deficit thinking youth, such as tracking, remediation, classification as disabled, and other mechanisms of marginalization (Trueba, 2001), which make the educational situation of youth of color and youth from low-income families even worse.

In addition, a vivid example presented by dominant groups as a token to illustrate that teachers and administrators are accountable for students' academic success, as well as individual efforts can overcome obstacles, is the case of students who have made high test scores in mandated achievement testing in a prestigious Black private school, Xavier Prep in New Orleans (Harris & Longstreet, 1990). This case has been singled out by dominant groups as proof that socioeconomic factors are not critical to success and that a dedicated faculty can overcome all difficulties, implying that educators or students themselves hold full responsibility for students' academic achievement, not the society/state/nation upon which the schools depend.

As now implemented in most states, standards and accountability appear to be designed mainly to identify and punish "poor-performing" schools and students (Gratz, 2000). For example, the legislation called for states to introduce mandated standardized testing in math and reading for all children in grades 3 through 8 by 2003 and penalizes "under-performing" schools by closing them or turning them into for-profit charter school operations (Suchak, 2001). If the implementation of standards and accountability is for political rather than educational purposes, standards and accountability will be misused and abused for political gain. Also, using aggregated standardized test data of various types as the primary indicator in monitoring the success or failure and progress or regression of the American educational system is

not fair because it threatens the core principles of public education in that it does not validly predict either students' needs to become intellectually competent adult/citizens or their good performance for the skills of higher-level thinking and problem solving. Moreover, there is no evidence that passing the current tests is equal to student success (Steeves, et, al, 2002) . In addition, these quantitative data that show statistically significant differences very often reveal technical flaws and therefore need our scrutiny of their validity.

Regarding the magic games of statistics, it is important to take a look at the case of the Texas myth, which shows us the hazards of high-stakes testing and reminds us how vital it is, when judging educational endeavors, to return to the root meaning of the word accountability and to inquire into conduct, as well as consequences, even though the Texas Assessment of Academic Standards (TASS), initially developed by NCEE and Harcourt Brace, is perhaps the crowning glory of President Bush's years as governor of Texas. According to Fuller et al. (2001) , based on the rankings of states' average scale scores, Texas students have made tremendous progress in their mathematics knowledge and skills as measured by NAEP (nation's report card) similar to the case we see in the movie *Stand and Deliver*. However, as Haney (2000) concluded and wondered, how does one justify the high exemption rates or the high dropout rates of minority youth, black and Hispanics in Texas? In actuality, as Fox (2002) has informed us, dropout rates have already risen in places like Bush's Texas and Brother Bush's Florida, especially for Latinos. Moreover, how does one find out the extent to which teachers are teaching to the test? Even though the NAEP performance of children of color and children from low-income homes in Texas have been higher than that of students in other states, how does one interpret why their NAEP performance is still less than that of their White and more affluent counterparts?

Fox (2002) believes, "Tests have the added advantage of being cheaper than providing adequate resources to every school, and certainly they are cheaper than creating a just and equal society"(p. 28). Moreover, a Boston-based anti-standardized testing organization, New Democracy, has suggested that high-stakes standardized testing that has caused students' high dropout rates, rightly meet the corporate goal "to ensure a workforce willing to accept low-wage service jobs after they either graduate from a basic-skills-only high school education or drop out because of their inability to pass the punitive tests" (Fox, 2002, p. 30). It is reasonable to justify the

statement above because reducing expectation meets contemporary market economy needs for low-paid jobs in the postindustrial society.

Neo-conservatives' and neo-liberals' maneuvering of politics by using mandated achievement testing for educational accountability is evident. From the invoking symbolic language in *The Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) during *Reagan's* presidency to the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 during current President George W. Bush's administration, state mandated achievement tests linked to educational reform reveal material and symbolic relations of power. As complicity in the propaganda of dominant ideologies, mainstream mass media, such as the press and films (like *Stand and Deliver*), minimize the opposition and ignore or downplay the many detailed statements by education researchers and professional organizations critical of high-stakes standardized tests on the one hand (Fox, 2002), and promote standardized testing as an effect assessment tool on the other. As a result, it has become a statement of fact that mandated standardized achievement testing is trustworthy, desirable, scientific, fair, objective, and supports educational standards.

In actuality, standardized testing is a hugely profitable enterprise. Suchak (2001) has argued against President George W. Bush's education reform that implements high-stakes standardized testing and has pointed out that:

The Bush testing mandates will represent the pinnacle of a decade-long 'education-reform' campaign orchestrated by a cabal of corporate executives, self-serving politicians, testing companies and public policy pundits determined to control and profit from public schooling. Public schooling is part of a \$600 billion education industry, and privatization has long been the ultimate goal of this organized effort. The powerful coalition that advocates high-stakes testing, vouchers and charter schools envisions the eventual turnover of public schools into the hand of corporate contractors. Thus far, they have succeeded in veiling their true motives behind the banners of 'higher standards' and 'accountability,' altruistically calling for higher levels of achievement for all students and schools. (p.36)

According to Giroux (2003), President Bush's educational policy favors conservatives by expanding "the power of capital, individual competitiveness, and corporate control and regulation" (p.78) at the expense of "substantive democracy, critical citizenship, and basic human rights" (p. 89). He continues to argue that:

At the heart of Bush's vision of schooling is a corporatized model of education that cancels out the democratic ideals and practices of civil society by either devaluing or absorbing them within the logic

of the market. No longer a space for relating the self to the obligations of public life, and social responsibility to the demands of critical and engaged citizenship, schools are viewed as an all-encompassing horizon for producing market identities, values, and those privatizing pedagogies that inflate the importance of individual competition....This package of educational reform.....promotes institutionalized class- and race-based forms of tracking and a culture of failure for those who don't have the cultural and academic resources to negotiate successfully a dreary test-based curriculum and the high-stakes sorting mechanisms of a state- and corporate-regulated testing machine (p. 80).

The implementation of punitive standardized high-stakes testing creates higher levels of competition and a tracking system, as well as imposing a great pressure on students and teachers; the current education policies result in the privatization of the public school, which undermines the basic foundations of democratic public life. Also, the media and public institutions such as schools function to reproduce public consent for, and complicity with, hegemonic ideologies. These ideologies drive the history of systemic inequalities, oppression, and sanctioned violence in this country. Hence, the gap between the poor and the wealthy has become even wider. Capitalism and free-market practices (more federal subsidies therefore have technically and tactfully shifted from the poor to the rich) have worked to benefit the prosperous few who manage the economy and dictate social policy. Chomsky (1995) has asserted that children are affected by unmet needs, such as quality schooling and economic opportunity, poverty, discrimination, and racism; the harsh violence which is done to them will inevitably be a catalyst for a rise of violence by children. He argues that the dominant groups and the media intentionally divert public attention from the other violence being done to the general population and scapegoat children as the source rather victims of violence.

Conclusion: Toward Pedagogy of Hope and Resistance to Mandatory Standardized Testing

High-stakes standardized testing not only harms children by reducing their worth to single test scores, but also directly threatens the core principles of public education. The goal of pedagogy is to prepare students for higher-level thinking and problem solving, as well as to relate student's "self to the obligations of public life, and social responsibility to the demands of critical and engaged citizenship" (Giroux, 2003, p.79) ; and appropriate evaluation for students' accountability is to aim at assessing

their performance of these higher-order learning skills. A pedagogy of hope and vision that transforms existing social and political problems for social justice in a democratic society does not occur in classrooms in which hegemonic discourse silences culturally and linguistically diverse children or forces them into meaningless drills. Bush's educational reform dismisses the important elements of schooling and critical teaching: the provision of knowledge is to relate to students' daily experiences; supportive environments in which students can learn is offered; and a variety of teaching approaches and forms of assessment are developed due to the recognition that students learn at different paces (Giroux, 2003).

Because the implementation of tough tests and standards has been the priority,, professional standards have not been maintained. In addition, there's no evidence that setting these standards results in higher performance. Growing resistance among educators, parents, and students have increased. There are several states that are taking the lead in developing their own alternative assessments: Arizona, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, and Vermont (Shepard, 1991).

.To challenge the Bush education agenda, we need to reaffirm the importance of the classroom as a site for individual growth, as well as the social transformation of those social relations that construct the various cultural sites of oppression and struggle. An emerging rebellion driven by negative consequences for children, parents, and teachers has occurred and will certainly cause political support to wane. The best way to build a broad-based, democratic movement against hegemonic mechanisms including promotion of standardized testing is to explain to people why these ideologies transmitted through mass media (i.e., the press and film) or public institutions (i.e., schools) are being imposed on youth, and by whom.

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