

## Standardized Testing Is Racist

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*Standardized testing perpetuates institutionalized racism and contributes to the achievement gap between whites and minorities. For instance, the deeply embedded stereotype that African Americans perform poorly on standardized tests hinders many African Americans' testing ability. Also, research has shown that minorities statistically have lower standardized test scores than whites because of existing, hidden biases in the development and administration of standardized tests and interpretation of their scores. Therefore, the achievement gap will not begin to close until current standards and assessment tests are significantly reformed.*

That there is a race gap in educational achievement is not news. Large numbers of the nation's children leave school, with and without high school diplomas, barely able to read, write, and do simple math. But the failures of the school are not evenly distributed. They fall disproportionately on students of color.

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Even when parents' income and wealth is comparable, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and immigrants for whom English is not a first language lag behind English-speaking, native-born, white students. The evidence for the gap has been documented repeatedly by the usual measures. These include drop-out rates, relative numbers of students who take the advanced placement examination, who are enrolled in the top academic and "gifted" classes and/or admitted to higher-status secondary schools, colleges, graduate, and professional programs. And last but not least, are the discrepancies in scores on standardized tests of academic achievement, on which teachers' and students' fate so heavily depend. . . .

## **Historical Explantion**

Over the years, the major reasons given for the claimed superior attainments of whites in cultural, artistic, and academic endeavors were overtly racist. It was said that the explanation lay in the superior genes of white northern European, Anglo-Americans. As the social sciences developed in the latter years of the 19th and the 20th centuries, "scientific" tracts defending white supremacy appeared with regularity. By the 1930's, the eugenics movement (which posited a biological basis for the superiority of whites) managed to gain a foothold in North American universities. And, it is relevant to add, all the leaders of this overtly racist movement were the leaders of the newly emerging field of scientific mental measurement. Many were the same men who testified before Congress in the early 1920's and lent scientific credence to the racist immigration exclusion acts which barred or greatly restricted immigration from Asia, Latin America, and southern and eastern Europe. The eugenics movement was considered a respectable academic discipline until it was discredited following the defeat of the Third Reich and the immensity of the crimes committed in the name of Nordic racial purity. . . .