

The Teacher's Testing Panopticon

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This literature review and commentary applies high-stakes testing to Foucault's notion of panopticism (observing, examining, and controlling people in order to regulate them). The author compares panopticism to teaching in Prueba (pseudonym for the high school where she taught mostly low-income Mexican American students). Students who didn't pass the exit level reading, writing, and math sections of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) could not graduate; state officials based teacher, administrator, and school performances (in part) on how well students performed on the TAAS. The author describes Prueba's testing, poverty, and second language contexts, as well as its pensive testing atmosphere, and her teaching beliefs and practices (which countered the school's focus on the state's basic skills battery). Next, she explains the history of panopticism and relates panopticism to the physical structure, administrative practices, and testing emphasis of Prueba and schools similar to it. Lastly, she explains how the panopticon of testing affected her as well as other teachers in high-stakes contexts.

I lived Foucault's panopticon as a remedial reading teacher at Prueba High (pseudonym for a test-oriented Texas school that served mostly low-income Mexican-American students). In this commentary and literature review, I describe the relationship between testing, poverty, and second language contexts. Next, I discuss Prueba's pensive atmosphere and my teaching beliefs and practices (which countered Prueba's teach-to-the-test focus). Furthermore, I explain the history of panopticism (observing, examining, and controlling people in order to use and regulate them). I then relate panopticism to the school's physical structure, administrative practices, and teach-to-the-test emphasis. Furthermore, I explain how the panopticon of testing affected me, as well as many teachers in related situations.

Prueba's Interplay of Testing, Poverty, and Language

In the early 1990s Texas public school students began taking the exit-level Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Before that time, graduation from high

school was not related to their writing, reading, and math TAAS scores. Texas public school teachers began to experience higher stakes in 1997, also, because a portion of their appraisals were based on the TAAS scores of all students on their campus. In 2003 the Texas Education Agency (TEA) replaced the TAAS with the more rigorous Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS); the TEA added retention stakes for the elementary and middle school levels and increased tested subject areas. Because I was at Prueba before TAKS, I will refer to this test as I knew and experienced it—the TAAS.

Popham (1987) coined the term "high-stakes" to refer to a standardized measurement with major consequences for schools (e.g., media scrutiny and teacher appraisals) and students (e.g., failure and retention). These high-stakes tests tend to adversely affect teachers and students in schools serving predominately low-income students (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001). To prevent potential negative consequences, teachers in these contexts tend to teach to the test. For example, in

their survey of 186 Georgia teachers, Monsaas and Engelhard (1994) found a statistically significant negative correlation between the socioeconomic levels of students and test preparation; teachers in schools with more students of poverty reported that they engaged in more test training than did teachers in higher-income schools. Furthermore, from their focus interviews with 6 urban and 4 suburban teachers, Luna and Livingstone Turner (2001) found that the urban teachers experienced more pressure from school administrators to teach to the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) than the suburban teachers. Lastly, McNeil (2000) found in her ethnographic study that Houston magnet high schools (with predominately low-income students) focused curriculum to passing the TAAS.

Because 86% of Prueba students are low-income (Texas Education Agency, 2003a), they are more “at-risk” for subjugation and control. For example, Nieto (2000) observes that many low-income schools have loud bells for passing periods to condition students to be factory workers, whereas middle-class schools have subtle-sounding chimes to condition students to be leaders and entrepreneurs. Besides demarcations of time, the following contribute to segmented, routine, and isolated teaching and learning in schools such as Prueba: individualized departments (versus interdisciplinary teams), the segmentation of skills and topics within a subject (versus thematic teaching), and individual planning (versus team teaching). This “meticulous partitioning” (Ryan, 1991, p. 112) of space, time, and subjects is part of a disciplinary technology in schools serving predominately low-income students of color.

Many immigrant students, like students of poverty, have more difficulty in receiving high test scores because of English language difficulties and lack of cultural familiarity with some test items (Bronwyn, 2002). However, the TEA does

not consider language differences when it holds English language learners accountable for passing the TAKS in reading and writing, even if the learners have been in Texas public schools for less than four years (Texas Education Agency, 2003b). Most bilingual educators would concur that three years is not enough time to acquire academic English

Prueba’s Pensive Atmosphere

Many Prueba students, teachers, and administrators were apprehensive about the TAAS reading, writing, and math sections. Students feared not graduating if they didn’t pass all three sections. Teachers feared losing their jobs (which is what our former principal threatened at a faculty meeting my first year at Prueba). When I arrived, Prueba was on district probation due to low TAAS scores, high dropout rates, and student absences. To commiserate matters, another former principal said he would lose his job if student test scores didn’t improve dramatically.

Yet, this fear of failure regarding high-stakes tests doesn’t relate to low-performing schools only. For example, last year I was a teacher-researcher of an after-school cultural arts program in a TEA exemplary-rated elementary school. Teachers and administrators said they feared that third graders would not advance to fourth grade if the latter failed the new TAKS reading section. Faculty said they were also concerned they would lose their exemplary rating. Thus, students who told me and others that they wanted to attend my after-school cultural arts program were forced to attend TAKS tutorials. Instead of getting the English language learners I requested, teachers sent me students who passed benchmarks and who didn’t have the state’s limited English proficient (LEP) label. Even though participants did not feel the same pressure to pass TAKS as the English language learners, most mentioned TAKS

preparation when I asked them to describe what they did in school during structured interviews (Bussert-Webb, 2003). This test-focused exemplary elementary, like Prueba, served mostly low-income students of color and English language learners. Guerrero and Sloan (2001) corroborate my finding of a testing focus in their ethnographic study of four exemplary elementary schools that served mostly Spanish-dominant students of poverty.

My Beliefs and Practices

The testing preparation at Prueba ran counter to my experiences and beliefs. I am a Hungarian American with teaching experience from Honduras, Spain, as well as diverse U.S. schools. When I began teaching at Prueba in 1995, I was nearly finished with my doctoral degree from Indiana University in Language Education, with an emphasis in reading. I was so excited to be back in the classroom to actualize the theories I had come to embrace (and still embrace).

As a feminist standpoint epistemologist, I believe my students and I can change our perceptions of the world if we name our oppression and our identities (feminists, Chicanos, etc.); without this conscious identity-naming it is difficult to notice oppression (Alcoff, 1989). Besides standpoint feminist epistemology, I also believe in a simultaneous discussion of race, culture, class, and gender (hooks, 1989; Hill Collins, 1991). As a Prueba reading teacher, my students and I read and performed different versions of fairy tales (e.g., Walker's feminist *Snow Night*, 1996; Chin's *China's Bravest Girl: The Legend of Hua Mu Lan*, 1993; Stewig's *Princess Florencia and the Iron Shoes*, 1995; and the Grimm Brothers' *Snow White*, 1965). We critiqued these and other fairy tale versions in terms of race, class, gender, and culture. Pairs then wrote, illustrated, and read aloud fairy tales from their own perspectives.

As a critical literacy teacher, I tried to raise student consciousness about their oppression and the oppression of others; we also discussed ways to fight oppression (Shor, 1987). For example, some students wrote letters to the principal suggesting things they wanted to change at Prueba. Students and I also discussed race, class, and language issues vis-à-vis the TAAS-test as a graduation requirement, because I believe high-stakes testing is part of a larger cultural, political, and social phenomenon.

As a sociosemiotician, I believe in classroom community building; meaningful, generative learning and assessment experiences; collaborative student-student, student-teacher, and teacher-teacher interactions (Vygotsky, 1978); and the making and sharing of meaning through sign or communication systems (Berghoff, 1998). I followed these beliefs by having students interpret literature through art, music, dance, drama, and language sign systems and by planning thematic units that focused on collaborative inquiry. For one unit, my students and I presented *Snow White* (Grimm, 1965) in the auditorium for first graders (with stage lights, music, props, and costumes). For another unit, we conducted a mock trial of a comic book version of Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* (Grant & Spiegle, 1990); students and their teacher in another reading class were our jurors for the court trial. My students also investigated controversial issues of interest to them (e.g., abortion, animal testing, border patrol, etc.). Each student or pair investigated the pros and cons of their topic, depicted their inquiries through any modality (art, music, writing, etc.), and presented their learning to the class. Their collages, posters, multimedia sculptures, and mobiles (made of hangers) decorated our classroom as artifacts of their inquiries.

Pressure to Conform

During my first semester at Prueba, I thought I was doing a good job within my belief systems of feminism, critical literacy, and sociosemiotics. However, when a former principal observed me in November, she took a point off because students took too long to return their journals and another point off because I allowed students to talk the last few minutes of class. This administrator told me I must teach TAAS skills bell-to-bell. She put me on a “plan,” which included my walking around the room to monitor students and to keep them on-task at all times. I also had to have “sponge” activities (e.g., TAAS worksheets) to keep students busy until the bell rang. Lastly, she told our reading department chair that we had to say “TAAS” in every sentence.

I listened to my principal because I was a first year teacher for the district and thus had a probationary contract. I was afraid of not being asked to return. Similarly, many of the 59 teacher interviewees in Barksdale-Ladd’s and Thomas’ study (2000) feared losing their jobs as well as salary cuts because of their students’ low test scores. (The researchers did not mention whether the teachers came from low-performing schools.) Also, Bentham and O’Brien (2002) found that the 114 survey respondents who had left teaching ranked the stress of increasing accountability (high-stakes tests and test preparation) as their first reason for leaving; the researchers randomly sampled all graduates from their university who received teaching credentials. So, because I didn’t want to be fired or didn’t want to leave teaching, I added more TAAS activities to my lessons. Of course I was still subversive and I did things totally unrelated to TAAS. Every semester students and I continued the plays in the auditorium and we continued many of the holistic activities previously mentioned.

Yet I was in turmoil. I worried that my high school students (many of whom

had third grade reading levels when they entered our classroom) would not pass the TAAS if I didn’t teach to it. So I peppered TAAS worksheets with the holistic activities. Besides sliding in some basic skills worksheets to ensure that I was “teaching TAAS,” I rushed my students from one activity to another to cover objectives I wrote on the board that day. During my induction into the district, personnel trainers told us that “good teaching” was to (1) state our objectives, (2) cover the objectives, and (3) assess whether students demonstrated understanding of the objectives. This behavioral framework assumes that teachers can observe changes in behavior covertly, but constructivists (and post-modernists) believe that concepts such as appreciation and discovery are not directly observable; furthermore, writing specific objectives does not take into account diverse students who learn at different rates and in other modalities (Kellough, 1997).

Despite my knowledge of feminism, critical literacy, and sociosemiotics, I compromised my beliefs about “good teaching” to appease the district and principal—until I became pregnant the fall of my third year at Prueba. At that time, I decided I would stay at home to be with my baby who was due in June. Thus, during my last year I covered my lesson plans with TAAS objectives, but taught entirely—and covertly—from the belief systems I followed during my first semester. In two articles I explain why and how I returned to my former belief systems and how well my students did on the TAAS, despite my refusal to use any TAAS passages and accompanying comprehension questions (Bussert-Webb, 1999, 2000).

It might seem odd that I compromised my beliefs. Yet, my story demonstrates the power of panopticism. Foucault (1977) argues that individuals often compromise their beliefs in a totalizing environment to conform to the norms of docility and productivity. So, if a 34-year-old with

diverse teaching and life experiences and a doctoral protégée of Jerome Harste and Carolyn Burke (leading sociosemioticians) could fall prey to normalizing behavior, then imagine 22-year-olds with less theoretical grounding! But how did panopticism originate and become so powerful?

The Origin of Panopticism

"Panopticon" derives from the Greek words "pan" (everything) and "opticon" (a place of sight); "thus, a place of sight to see everything" (Wirth, 1988, p. 13). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes Bentham's panopticon as a large courtyard with a tower in the center, surrounded by prison cells with big windows. The cells are "small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible" (p. 200). Inmates cannot see whether guards are present, so they become their own guardians. London-born Bentham (1748-1832), a critic of judicial institutions, developed this prison design while in Russia (Sweet, 2001). Bentham hoped it would interest Czarist Catherine the Great, but had no luck selling his design so he continued promoting his panopticon at great expense for 20 years (Sweet, 2001). The Russian and British monarchies were disinterested in Bentham's panopticon, but Americans implemented it when they built the Philadelphia Eastern State Penitentiary in 1829 (three years before Bentham's death). "This radical building became a global sensation—the most influential prison ever built" (Farmer & Mann, 2003, p. 52).

Ironically, Bentham's elements of this once-unpopular idea are common in prisons and other modern institutions. Bentham would be delighted because he actually intended administrators to use the panopticon in other contexts. For example, his lengthy book title is: *Panopticon: or, the Inspection-House; Containing the Idea of a New Principle of Construction Applicable to Any Sort of Establishment,*

in Which Persons of Any Description are to be Kept Under Inspection; and in Particular to Penitentiary-houses, Prisons, Houses of Industry, Workhouses, Poor Houses, Manufactories, Madhouses, Lazarettos, Hospitals, and Schools ... (Hanson, 1993, p. 114).

Like Bentham, officials and architects in increasingly modern societies searched for ways to make architecture fit their needs for efficiency and control. Thus, variations of Bentham's panopticon appeared in societies that changed from agrarian to industrial expeditiously. Prisons, factories, and schools had greater numbers of the masses to serve and to control in large industrial cities. Also, hospitals began to have long corridors with individual patient rooms to prevent contagions and observation windows to monitor patients' progress (Foucault, 1977). This disciplinary space causes those within an enclosure or space (e.g., a hospital room, factory line, prison cell, or classroom) to succumb to monotony. In France, Pâris-Duverney developed a military training school in which trainees' individualized compartments had small windows for trainers' constant surveillance: "The very building of the Ecole was to be an apparatus for observation. The rooms were distributed along a corridor like a series of small cells ... and Paris has insisted that 'a window be placed on the corridor wall of each room from chest-level to within one or two feet of the ceiling'" (Foucault, 1977, pp. 172-173).

Prueba, as well as other schools I've been in, has the same types of "penitentiary-like" tiny classrooms, 6" wide windows on doors, and long corridors, so it doesn't appear to be a stretch for Delpit (2003) and others to draw comparisons between prisons and schools. Delpit, for example, writes this fictional scene between a teacher and African American students in a fifth grade urban classroom as they discuss post-Civil War Black Codes:

"[Teacher]: ... A Black man without a job could be charged with vagrancy and end up in jail. Just think for a moment. Can you imagine how horrible it would be to be in jail?"

"Yeah," responds one of her charges, "I guess it would be kinda like being in school" (Delpit, 2003, p. 14).

Apparently even 5th graders can see the resemblances between school and prison! Inherent in any panopticon (whether a school, prison, or hospital) are windows to peer inside and the segmentation of the individual from others.

It is amusing that utilitarian Bentham, founder of the greatest happiness principle, developed a plan that contributes to a prison-like atmosphere and the stress and loneliness of many teachers. Indeed, school cultures that create and reinforce isolation promote teacher unhappiness or dissatisfaction, whereas school cultures that are collegial and collaborative promote teacher happiness or satisfaction (Hargreaves, 1994). It appears that Bentham and the architects of panopticon-like militaries, schools, and hospitals did not mean for people to be unhappy. Instead, they merely responded to a societal need for a docility that would increase profit and efficiency.

Prueba's Panopticon

As long as teachers and students were efficient in their test-preparation classrooms, then everything was fine at Prueba. Administrators could monitor teachers and students from 6" wide chest-level door windows and angled classroom windows without being noticed. In fact, we received many reminders in our teacher boxes by the office to take down any window coverings so administrators could observe us at all times. Prueba administrators, as well as other administrators from the district and state, can look into classroom windows and add their observations to

year-end teacher evaluations; they can also come into classrooms at any time for a "walk-through." This type of observation and documentation leads to the normalization or conformity of teachers. "The act of looking over and being looked over, the mere fact of things being known and people being seen allows for the penetration, control, and regulation of human behavior" (Ryan, 1991, p. 105).

Yet the Prueba observations and "walk-throughs" were not just to observe and regulate our performance. They were also for confiscating treats from teachers. One Halloween, the vice principals checked each teacher's classroom for any evidence of goodies. My students and I watched in dismay as one vice principal took all the treats my colleague bought for her students. (I distributed treats to my students the day before because I intuited that the treat sweeps would happen on the 31st.) When my colleague and I talked in the hall during the next passing period, she said they took the items from her closet. She kept saying, "I can't believe it. I just can't believe it." Administrators confiscated another teacher's entire cooler of soft drinks on that Halloween sweep and made classrooms festivity-free during holidays and at the end of every semester. They forbade class parties before the reading, writing, and math TAAS test and retest dates (e.g., until May). At times I felt I was Winston in *1984* (Orwell, 2000). Yet Prueba's 1984 atmosphere isn't unique. We can see, hear, and feel subjugation and control in schools across America—

the speaking, listening intercoms—
impossible to interfere with their
incessancy
the blasting bells bellowing "Stop,
start! Stop, start!"
the short service stalls to see students
smoking
the classroom apertures appropriate
for ambling administrators
the narrow halls to stop student
socialization. (Foucault, 1977)

The Panopticon of Testing

The physical structures of surveillance and control (e.g., hall windows and narrow corridors) are the most common associations people have with panopticism. However, Foucault's notion extends to examinations. Foucault (1977) states, "It is the fact of being constantly seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. And the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, holds them in a mechanism of objectification" (p. 187).

According to Madaus (1993), individualized testing began as a Chinese policy mechanism in 210 B.C. Yet, before the 1700s "power was what was seen, what was shown and what was manifested" (Foucault, 1977, p. 187). In the 1700s large groups of students in Christian boy schools in Europe began taking paper and pencil tests in the same room (Foucault, 1977). In 1845, Horace Mann introduced standardized exams in Boston Public Schools so that students would get identical questions under similar exam conditions; Mann's other purposes were to rank students and to use school test results as "political leverage over recalcitrant headmasters" (Madaus, 1993, p. 17). This sorting of students became even more popular in the early 1900s when Binet introduced mental ability or IQ tests (Association for Early Childhood International, 1991).

Testing introduced invisible power—power that determined whether kindergartners were special education students or "normal" and whether young Americans were Korean War foot soldiers or college material (Lemann, 2000). With testing, the powerful could be in the shadows (through an "objective test"), while those examined were in perpetual sunlight—constantly visible (Foucault, 1979). Recent examples of this visibility include:

- A former Prueba dean wanted to compile a list of teachers whose students did not pass TAAS. He said the list would be used to evaluate teachers and to help them apply more test-taking strategies. I protested this by bringing up equity issues; some teachers taught advanced placement, gifted and talented, or dual enrollment classes exclusively, but others (like me) taught only remedial classes.
- Employees at the TEA use the TAKS as a norm-referenced test when they rate and sort students, schools, and districts. TEA's monitoring of test scores and its subsequent rewards and punishments (e.g., retaining or passing students, giving bonuses to principals for high scoring campuses, and closing down schools) are part of the disciplinary technology of panopticism.
- Local newspapers publish front-page stories of schools' TAKS results. The November 9, 2003, edition of *The Brownsville Herald* contained a lead front-page article entitled "BISD Test Scores Below Average" (Huff, 2003); Huff compared a district's TAKS scores to the region and state and mentioned only one of 14 campuses that received an exemplary rating.

The Media and the Machinery of Testing

Last year's lead TAKS article was no anomaly. Almost yearly, front page photos in local newspapers show smiling teachers waving banners at test celebration rallies. The reportage of students' standardized test scores appears to be a national phenomenon. In a Carnegie Foundation study of 207 Pennsylvania and 23 Maryland districts that included interviews and three-phased surveys, Corbett and Wilson (1989) found that media scrutiny related to a teach-to-the-test focus. For example, a Pennsylvania superintendent commented

about how the purpose of his state's low-stakes basic skills battery changed from remediation to the media's ranking of schools: "We don't believe in the tests that strongly but we will be forced to see all material is covered before the tests. We definitely are going to do it. We won't be caught in the newspapers again" (Corbett & Wilson, 1989, p. 21). Pennsylvania interviewees said tests were turning into political agendas, even though students didn't experience major consequences if they failed these tests. School board and community members saw their districts compared in newspapers and didn't like their low scores.

This media reportage of standardized test scores is a Foucaultian notion of spectacle (Vinson & Ross, 2001). Foucault's idea of "spectacle" was that many (e.g., newspaper readers) could observe the few (e.g., schools' overall test scores) (Foucault, 1977). Thus, reporters, who champion themselves as watchdogs, seem an integral part of the disciplinary technology of panopticism. The media (and other disciplinary technologies of the panopticon) are hard to stop because they function as pieces of machinery; "this network 'holds' the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another: supervisors, perpetually supervised" (Foucault, 1977, pp. 176-177). Yet, did Texas state legislators and TEA employees intentionally wish to objectify and regulate students, administrators, and teachers by developing this accountability system? No, according to Foucault. He argues that panopticism is not something one group does to another group. It's just a natural order of affairs because disciplinary technology becomes pervasive and even life-like in its hierarchical surveillance (Foucault, 1977).

Teachers scrutinized by peers and principals,
Principals scrutinized by area superintendents,

Area superintendents scrutinized by the school superintendents,
Schools and districts scrutinized by the state and media,
"Sssorry," the nervous gray man said from behind the lead-like curtain,
"I can't turn off the machine!"
(Baum, 1978)

Testing Teachers' Agency

A nervous Prueba principal told our reading faculty that we had to cover at least one of the six TAAS objectives in every lesson plan. These objectives were: (1) vocabulary; (2) details; (3) main ideas; (4) cause/effect and predicting; (5) inferences, generalizations, and graphs/charts; and (6) recognizing propaganda, author's point of view, and fact and non-fact. These are reasonable reading skills for any high school graduate. However, these TAAS objectives, along with the ones for writing and math, were the curriculum at Prueba. For example, a Prueba principal wrote on a teacher's weekly lesson plan, "Where's TAAS?" Apparently he did not feel what she was teaching specifically related to this basic skills battery.

A classic example of teaching-to-the-test comes from Passman (2001), who conducted a case study of Esther, a fifth grade teacher whose students investigated questions of interest to them in an Age of Exploration unit. For several weeks, the students researched in books and on the Internet. Passman and Esther felt the student inquiry projects were successful because the students were engaged and gave sophisticated presentations. Yet soon after the unit, the principal called a meeting to tell faculty they could only teach material on the Iowa test. He threatened them about job security and probation if student Iowa scores were not high. Thus, Esther returned to a traditional curriculum in which the students no longer worked collaboratively. "The constructivist stuff is nice," the teacher said, "but we have real work to do now."

It is obvious that Esther returned to traditional teaching because of her principal's threats. These "or-else" threats do more than limit curricular innovation. They make teachers feel that other content is not worth teaching: "The 'or-else' effect establishes the priority of that particular content (information, facts, skills, values, and so on) as well as the inferiority, unworthiness, and marginalization of other contents (and knowledge)" (Vinson & Ross, 2001, pp. 8-9). Like Vinson and Ross, I believe that our nation's accountability policies are in place to control what teachers do and discuss with students. Teachers cannot talk with students about oppression and how to fight against it when they are too worried about the content or objectives on a standardized test. The result is that the status quo is maintained. Teachers simply reproduce inequalities.

A teacher participant in McNeil's (2000) ethnographic study of Houston magnet high schools tried to fight these inequalities with challenging, culturally relevant reading materials for her mostly Latino students. This Ivy League graduate who also had a master's from a prestigious college spent much time and personal money developing a class library and curriculum of Latino literature since the school had no library; \$20,000 went to a "Beat-the-TAAS" type of test-preparation materials. The teacher's students responded enthusiastically to these classroom materials; however, after this teacher returned from lunch one day, the Hispanic literature for her week's lessons was pushed aside. In the middle of her desk were several test-prep booklets with this message: "Use these instead of your regular curriculum until after the TAAS"—three months away (McNeil, 2000, p. 730).

I imagined myself as McNeil's participant—full of energy and passion—being reduced to a TAAS master. I felt that I, too, could have given so much to students during the two years I succumbed to the panopticon if I would have been

trusted to teach from my beliefs, from my soul. McNeil's participant and I, as well as many teachers throughout the nation, have felt the impact of the testing panopticon. In fact, most of the 51 teacher interviewees in Barksdale-Ladd's and Thomas's study (2000) said that their teaching was worse instead of better as a result of preparing children for testing; one teacher said, "These tests frustrate high-energy teachers. They will deplete the talent base in teaching by causing talented teachers to leave" (p. 10). Another teacher interviewee said,

I'm not the teacher I used to be. I used to be great, and I couldn't wait to get to school every day because I loved being great at what I do. All of the most powerful teaching tools I used to use every day are no longer good to me now because they don't help children get ready for the test, and it makes me like a robot instead of a teacher. I didn't need a college degree or a master's degree to do what I do now. They don't need real teachers to prepare children for tests and, in fact, I think they could just develop computer programs to do this. (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000, p. 10)

Indeed, a qualitative difference exists in the way teachers perceive their agency in states that have high-stakes tests. For instance, Corbett and Wilson (1989) conducted a comparative study of low-stakes testing in Pennsylvania and high-stakes testing in Maryland. The authors interviewed students, teachers, principals, and district personnel in Maryland and Pennsylvania districts and found statistically significant differences between the two states; most Maryland teachers felt that the statewide test negatively impacted their work lives. In terms of pressure for performance, time demands, and paperwork, over half of the Maryland participants indicated the impact of high-stakes tests was "major" or "total." Many

Maryland teachers were concerned over liability when students failed and felt their professional judgments were not considered. Some Maryland interviewees commented:

- Professionals aren't trusted—the tests carry the aura of respectability.
- Teacher self-esteem goes down another notch each time something like this [publishing of test scores] happens.
- Teachers feel jerked around. The test tells them what to teach. (Corbett & Wilson, 1989, p. 17)

Pedulla et al. (2003) corroborate Corbett's and Wilson's research; in their findings from a national survey of teachers, Pedulla et al. found that pressure on teachers and test-preparation practices were significantly greater in states that had high stakes for students, teachers, schools, and districts.

When teachers are forced to engage exclusively in test-preparation practices, they forget the most important aspect of instruction: interactions with students. Teachers lose sight of the human process of teaching and become alienated from their labors (Shannon, 2001): "Reducing teachers and students to factors in the scripted system of test score production requires that they lose, at least officially, emotional, cultural, and social attachments to the process of teaching and learning and to each other" (p. 4).

Testing Teachers' Isolation

In high-stakes environments, many teachers become alienated, not just from their work and students, but from colleagues as well. Teachers in my former district often worked against colleagues in other schools to have the best school TAAS percentages, or the best rank in the district. "Each [school or district] is defined by the place it occupies in a series,

and by the gap that separates it from the others" (Foucault, 1977, p. 145). For example, one school in our district had the highest TAAS scores in reading, but their reading teachers refused to share their strategies.

Teachers within a school compete against each other, also. In a panopticon of testing, colleagues may "tell on" a deviant teacher so the former achieve higher rank for: (1) teaching to the test the most, (2) obeying school and district mandates the most, and (3) having the highest-scoring students. Thus, the deviant teacher becomes alienated. If she shares her deviance with peers (as I naively did), she risks being found out, which in turn produces more administrative scrutiny and control. If she keeps her deviancy private, she becomes isolated. For example, a teacher in my own department (who often borrowed my lesson plans on Monday mornings because she said they were creative) told a former principal that I was not teaching TAAS skills. The principal called me into her office to confront me on the issue. I convinced her that I taught TAAS skills within thematic units of interest to students. I didn't tell the principal that I developed my inquiry and thematic units first (as a nonlinear approach), and then added the TAAS objectives that seemed appropriate. A rational-linear approach would have been to write TAAS objectives, then to add activities (Jensen & Kiley, 2000).

Yet, what was the effect of this colleague "telling the principal on me?" I kept my curricular ideas to myself even more, which was much less productive in terms of resistance. Perreault might call my approach an "unproductive solitary craftsmen model" (2000, p. 705) because other teachers do not benefit from an innovative colleague who goes clandestine in high-stakes environments. In teach-to-the-test environments, holistic teachers have few thought collectives in their schools. For example, Darlene, a graduate student in Newman's class, wanted to

incorporate portfolios into her classroom at a school where she just got hired. A colleague told Darlene on her first day on the job: "We don't do stuff like that here. We'll hate you if you do because then we'll have to start doing the same thing ..." (Newman, 1998, p. 289). Darlene then wrote: "Four months later, I still have not implemented my portfolio plan" (p. 289). Hargreaves (1994) and Rosenholtz (1989) argue that the balkanization that Newman's student experienced creates teacher dissatisfaction, incertitude, and loneliness.

Dussault, Deaudelin, Royer, and Loisel (1999) quantify this loneliness in their systematic random-sampling of 1,110 Quebec teacher respondents. The researchers found a positive and significant correlation between Quebec teachers' isolation and their occupational stress. The loneliness scale and teacher stress inventory that participants completed were pretested, valid, and reliable instruments.

Professional loneliness and isolation causes many teachers to become productive and docile within a teach-to-the-test environment, to leave the profession, to quit caring, or to resist (overtly or subversively). Perhaps it is easier to conform to normalization than to resist. Darlene, Newman's graduate student who wanted to incorporate portfolios, continues: "When it came to really putting myself on the line for what I truly believed was right, I couldn't do it. I tried to rationalize this by telling myself that I am a new teacher and I can't burn any bridges before I get a permanent position" (Newman, 1998, p. 290).

Similarly, in her case studies of nine teacher innovators, Pace (1992) found that colleague hostility was a major barrier to change for participants. One participant, Bev, described her experiences with colleagues: "I believed strongly in what I was doing, but the ostracism I experienced from people I had known for many years really got me down" (Pace, 1992, p. 466). Bev left her school for a year's sabbatical

to "work on a master's degree and to get away for a while from the tensions" (Pace, 1992, p. 467). Two other participants didn't change their practices because of pressure to conform to colleagues, two moved to different schools, one moved to a different grade level where she had more support, and three stayed in their schools and grade levels, but felt forced to do things in which they didn't believe.

Lipman and Gutstein (2000) share similar stories in their case study of three Chicago public school teachers. Two participants left teaching because they tired of the subjugation and control with high-stakes testing. The third participant, who also resisted teaching-to-the-test, said she was exhausted from testing practices at her school. Indeed, 85% of 201 teacher respondents in Texas agreed with this survey statement: "It has also been suggested that the emphasis on TAAS is forcing some of the best teachers to leave teaching because of the restraints the tests place on decision making and the pressures placed on them and their students" (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001, p. 488).

Conclusions

I disagreed with school and district administrators about what constituted good teaching and disliked the pressures placed on my students and me. However, I was eclectic in my teaching practices to appease the administration for approximately two of my three years at Prueba. During my first semester, I openly followed my belief systems of feminism, critical literacy, and sociosemiotics, but during my last semester I was a covert "solitary craftsman" (Perreault, 2000, p. 705). Writing this article has been painful. I started on it six years ago, but I closed the file many times because despair overcame me. I wish I could have fought "IT"—a big brain-brimming brine—better (L'Engle, 1962). I wish I would have been braver. Yet, in writing this article, I've

come to realize—sadly, regrettably, nauseously—that the panopticon of testing isn't going away soon because too few practitioners realize its effects, let alone its mere existence.

Thus, we must continue to publish the deleterious effects of high-stakes testing on low-income students of color and English language learners, as well as their teachers. And we must explore not just the effects of high-stakes testing, but also the reasons it occurs and why it is difficult to stop. Once we understand the nature of the machine, we can begin to disassemble it. Hopefully, this article will help in the deconstruction.

Foucault posits that since no one is to blame for social control, no one can fight against it. Although he does mention “struggles,” “revolutions,” and “rebels” in an interview (Fontana & Pasquino, 1984, pp. 71-72), he appears to see rebellion as useless because problems of subjugation and control are interwoven in other facets of our lives (e.g., technology, family, sexuality, etc.). Thus, the state “can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations” (Fontana & Pasquino, 1984, p. 64). Perhaps Foucault believes we are to wallow in mire because he offers no way out of the panopticon. It is here that I depart with this social reproductionist and offer resistance and anger as hope; for example, in her case study of seven teachers in Boston Public Schools, Nieto (2003) found that anger and hope were primary reasons that participants stayed in teaching. Indeed, although we are sometimes the receivers of injustices, our interpretations of our experiences can shape our beliefs and actions. As Merleau-Ponty tells us, we are actors of our worlds, and we are also acted upon (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

One of many ways to effect change is to form thought collectives with teachers who wish to support each other as reflective, creative, and caring practitioners; these communities of teachers are the antithesis of normalization and isola-

tion. For example, in his three-year case study of three elementary schools serving primarily low income culturally diverse learners, Strahan (2003) found that teacher and administration support for each other was related to students' increased scores on achievement tests (e.g., less than 50% in 1997 to more than 75% in 2002). Teachers and administrators planned together, helped others who were burdened, and shared responsibilities. Although they were under scrutiny to improve achievement test scores, they did not succumb to a panopticon-like environment.

The type of collegiality and sharing that Strahan found is rare, but possible with genuine administrator and teacher support. Yet when teachers cannot find this camaraderie within their schools, they may seek outside support. For instance, the Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ) and the California Consortium of Critical Educators (CCCE) give new urban teachers support as change agents in their classrooms and in their states. One member, Noah, a third year urban high school teacher, is helping the CEJ to draft an educational bill of rights that includes freedom from high-stakes testing; the CEJ hopes to use the document in a civil suit, *Williams v. the State of California* (Hunter Quartz, 2003). Like Noah, “resistant teachers see themselves as part of a group ... isolated individuals cannot be expected to substantially alter present circumstances” (Goodman, 1984, p. 30).

Those who cannot find thought collectives in their schools or communities may decide to step out of the panopticon of testing if they realize what is happening and why. The “solitary craftsman model” (Perreault, 2000, p. 705) that I used at Prueba might be unproductive for others, but at least it might cause those in a panopticon to remain sane. After all, “sanity ... can take three forms—to believe sham to be the truth; to see through sham while using it; or to see through sham but fight it” (Henry, 1973, pp. 126-127).

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