

## Unpack and interrogate the socio-political construct of the achievement gap

“To believe in the existence of any sort of achievement gap, some sort of racial hierarchy is actually to believe in a racist idea. The achievement gap between the races with whites and Asians at the top and blacks and Latinos at the bottom is a racist hierarchy. And this popular racist hierarchy has been constructed by our religious faith in standardized testing.” ~ Ibram X. Kendi

“Urban students quickly get the message that they can only be smart when they are not who they are. This in many cases is classroom colonialism.” ~ Prof. Chris Emdin, Reality Pedagogy

It is important that the local African American community doesn't fall for the achievement gap scheme. The gap is a social-political [construction](#) like money, race, adolescence, or dis/ability. Once you've entered the achievement gap arena, you've already lost because you've legitimized a [rigged system](#)—an academic “contest” that has Black students as the default loser.

Even if the so-called “achievement gap” is closed, African Americans and other marginalized communities will pay a price—that cost is their identity, dignity, and integrity. *Because the hidden purpose of standardized tests is to see how white students are*, Black children and youth can only succeed when they are not who they are.

“Can we call the preparation to reproduce the cultural hegemony of European-elites, education?”  
~ Mwalimu J. Shujaa, *Too much schooling, too little education*

“Do we have a meritocracy or just story about a meritocracy?”  
~ Prof. Jeff Duncan-Andrade “The game is rigged (inequity by design)” <https://vimeo.com/234442724>

“Since standardized test just see how white and middle class Black students are, as things stand, won't there always be an achievement gap?”  
~ John Harris Loflin

### Norm-referenced measures

“[Wayne] Au was referring to ‘norm-referenced measures’ like the ISTEP which are designed to compare students. ISTEP is intentionally designed to disperse average student scores along a bell curve, with some students performing very well, most performing average, and a few performing poorly. For example, 34% are always ‘above average,’ 34% are always ‘below average.’ Seen from this perspective, Au has a valid point: any official state assessments which in fact mandate the failure of any student is flawed.” ~ [Hoosier connections to Eugenics and standardized testing](#) p. 4

### “...there will always be a testing a gap.”

“[Wayne] Au's point is supported by James Popham who notes that since standardized tests must produce a wide spread of scores from high to low, exams must have a ‘wide range’ of difficulty. So, which questions produce the widest range?—those most closely linked to socio-economic status (SES). He found that between 15-80% of the questions (depending on the subject area) on norm-referenced exams were linked to SES. With SES status is out of the control of school officials, Popham concludes, there will always be a testing gap: children of the poor will tend to have the lower scores. Is this the way our public schools measure learning by ensuring some will always score low, making high stakes standardized tests ‘A game without winners’? Has this education policy become a racket enabling cheating by students, teachers, and school leaders?”

~ [Hoosier connections to Eugenics and standardized testing](#) p. 5

“In fact, I would argue that NCLB is itself a 21st century representation of eugenicist pseudoscience in its use of standards-based, Cartesian, modernist representation of what (literally) counts as learning and how it can be measured. This measurement of learning is a distinctly Eugenicist construct that has long been used as a way to sort people. NCLB ratchets this approach up a notch by sorting schools, not just individuals.”

~ Phil Smith, *Whatever happened to inclusion? The place of students with intellectual disabilities in education*

“These studies [Joseph & Holland’s ‘Equal Opportunity and Racial Differences in IQ’] show us that the races are equal; this result leads us to question the construct validity of many current standardized tests of verbal aptitude. [A]...review [of] my...studies...suggest a systematic underestimation of the ability of minorities. My studies question not only the construct validity, but also the reliability of the scores used to assess individual test performance, especially for minority students and even White students from lower socio-economic strata.” ~ R. Freedle, “How and Why Standardized Tests Systematically Underestimate African-Americans' True Verbal Ability and What to Do About It” <http://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1181&context=lawreview>

### ***Proposed Action Item***

AACI will hold a series of 4 televised public debates on the educational politics of the Achievement Gap concept based on the above quote by Ibram X. Kendi, “To believe in the existence of any sort of achievement gap, some sort of racial hierarchy is actually to believe in a racist idea. The achievement gap between the races with whites and Asians at the top and blacks and Latinos at the bottom is a racist hierarchy. And this popular racist hierarchy has been constructed by our religious faith in standardized testing.”

AACI will hold a series of 4 televised public debates on Prof. Ducan Andrade’s assertion that public education is a [rigged system](#).