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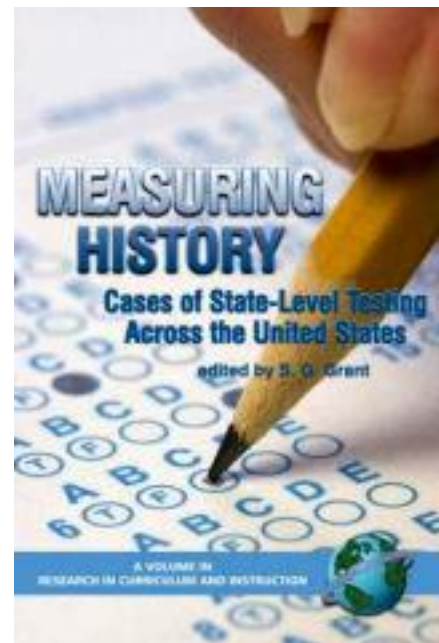
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Since the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the push to test children across many disciplines has increased as have the stakes attached to those tests. However, since education remains the domain of states, each one has sought to address NCLB in its own way. For social studies teachers this means a very uneven and confusing national landscape for their work particularly since NCLB does not mandate tests in social studies. Some states, like New York, have long required that students pass exams in Global and US history to graduate and also tests students in 5th and 8th grade in the subject, while other states still do not test students in Social Studies at all. Others offer comprehensive exit exams that cover 4-5 years of curriculum, and still others claim to include Social Studies within their Literacy assessments. In some states, the exams emphasize “facts” and in others the assessments require students to interpret data and construct historical arguments. In some states students must pass these exams to graduate, while in others they have no clear penalty attached. Thus, while teachers in some states struggle to address voluminous curriculums that are assessed via high-stakes exams, others struggle to maintain their subject’s status as resources and time are directed toward the areas where high-stakes exams are administered.

Measuring History: Cases of State-Level Testing Across the United States, edited by S.G. Grant is a welcome collection that addresses this crucial and relatively new issue for Social Studies educators—the impact of high stakes testing on the teaching and learning of history. The book brings together essays that explore the issue in different states with different testing regimes. The individual essays, mostly qualitative case studies of local contexts, offer snapshots of the conditions in which history



teachers toil while collectively, these essays offer a panoramic view of the national context. What emerges across this collection is the ever-present tension between the disciplining effort of these tests and the pedagogical goals of teachers. *Measuring History* offers nuanced and insightful interpretations of the ways testing is shaping history education and the work of teachers. It is a needed addition to the literature on the impact of testing on Social Studies education and is a useful book for policy makers, teachers, researchers, prospective teachers and teacher educators.



S. G. Grant

The collection begins with three essays, authored or co-authored by Grant himself, that frame the wide-ranging selections and offer historical context for this project. It then offers nine essays that explore the impact of testing on social studies teachers in Kentucky, New York, Michigan, Virginia, Texas and Florida. The book concludes with two essays that attempt to synthesize the essays by pulling out big themes and by drawing projections of the future. On the whole the material framing of the collection does not capture the depth of many of the essays themselves. In his introductory and concluding chapters, Grant raises the question of how ambitious teaching can be sustained in testing contexts. He has done excellent work on this topic examining the impact of the New York State Regents Exams (the battery of high-stakes tests required for graduation) on the teaching of social studies and has argued that “ambitious” teaching goes on despite the potential constraints of these exams Grant, 2001; 2003). This collection sets out to expand his framework to a national context. And, the essays do; but they go much further. The construct of “ambitious teaching” emphasizes the decisions of individual educators whereas the exploration of “teacher

resistance,” which many of the essays examine speaks to more systemic critique and thus also deepens the concept of “ambitious teaching.” The essays offer numerous examples of the ways teachers hold on to their professional ideals even as they feel pressured to capitulate to the tests but several also offer very complex readings of the quiet and invisible ways tests also shape the context of teaching. The strength of the collection lies in the several essays that expose submerged discourses and explore the less obvious ways that testing informs teacher practice. Rather than merely examining if high-stakes tests force teachers to teach to them, these essays look beyond what is most visible to examine the relationship of teaching and testing on several levels. They develop frameworks that enable us to see both what is explicit and implicit in the complex work world of teachers. Many of the essays offer nuanced insight into the relationships between teacher practice and the ways teachers understand their work and the tests.

Stephanie van Hover’s essay, “Teaching History in the Old Dominion: The Impact of Virginia’s Accountability Reform on Seven Secondary Beginning History Teachers” offers an excellent model for getting at the unspoken and often unacknowledged ways that testing shapes practice. She examines the ways new teachers respond to testing by triangulating interviews with observations of their teaching over the course of a year. Though these teachers did not perceive that the tests were driving their choices, as indicated in their interviews, in fact, the disciplining role of the tests was evident. Van Hover observes striking similarities in their practices though they teach in different schools and districts: they teach at about the same pace; cover the same topics, sometimes even on the same days. This essay elegantly shows how the tests shape the field in which teachers operate even if teachers themselves do not perceive the ways their professional decisions are being shaped. Her subjects did not question the logic imposed implicitly by the SOLs (Standards of Learning) and were simply socialized into accepting it as a taken-for-granted aspect of their teaching. By drawing on their perceptions as well as their practice and by comparing teachers across several schools, this small sample yields significant insight into the ways testing shapes the broader structures that inform practice. The impact of testing is not a

simple cause and effect relationship, but rather tests shape the underlying logic of the curriculum and the ways teachers think about their subject more than the day-to-day decisions they make.

Avner Segall's essay, "Teaching in the Age of Accountability: Measuring History or Measuring Up to It?" is equally rich in exploring not just teacher responses to testing but the ways testing shapes the ways teachers understand their work. Unlike van Hover's subjects, the teachers in his study felt that the MEAP (Michigan Evaluation Assessment Program) exam in social studies significantly impacted what and how they taught. However, he complicates these assertions with the observation that the examples they offered of what changed focused solely on content decisions, not on their instructional decisions. Further problematizing their responses, Segall notes that the MEAP exam does not test specific facts, but is rather a skills based test expecting students to interpret various forms of data—charts, graphs, primary and secondary sources—to answer multiple choice questions. Why then do teachers feel so oppressed by the test? His analysis probes the nature of teacher resistance to mandates recognizing that these tests affect teachers' professional identities as decision makers and as classroom leaders undermining their sense of empowerment and demoralizing many of them. Disrespected by the test in several ways, teachers resist teaching to the MEAP to negate its capacity to define their work and their worth. In the process of going beneath the surface of what teachers say, Segall's study also exposes the ways testing regimes exacerbate differences between affluent and poorer schools. The teachers who taught in suburban schools were provided some professional development on addressing the tests, while those in schools serving working-class populations were threatened over test results but offered no such help to address the exam. His overall argument speaks to the ways the MEAP attacked the professional identities of teachers, but he also offers insight into the ways these effects are mediated by teaching contexts and structural inequalities.

Teacher resistance proves to be a rich site to examine the impact of testing regimes on teacher practice throughout this collection. Cinthia Salinas' essay, "Teaching in a High-Stakes Testing Setting: What Becomes of Teacher Knowledge?" explores teacher resistance to the social studies exit exam in Texas. She brings the issue of cultural identity (of students and teachers) into this discussion, a disappointing absence in the collection as a whole. Teachers in her study explicitly challenged the content of the exam raising questions about its ideological message and resisted by refusing to yield curriculum they were politically and socially committed to. Overall, these teachers selectively complied with new mandates and drew on their subject matter knowledge as well as knowledge of the policy context itself to strategically get around the tests. Their resistance was an assertion of professional identity and expertise. Ann Marie Smith's "Negotiating Control and Protecting the Private: Accountability, History Teachers, and the Virginia Standards of Learning" also looks at teacher resistance. She examines the ideology behind state exams, which influences how teachers respond and includes a critical analysis of the SOLs, which privileges "Heritage History," where "history is presented as truth and sources of information are not interrogated (225)." In her study at a suburban high school, teachers (all chosen by the chair of the social studies department) generally resisted the dictates of the Heritage curriculum in their classrooms, but in public their resistance was muted at best. She found that most of her subjects (generally experienced teachers) though addressing SOL content continued to place facts in a meaningful context and maintained their professional goals in the privacy of their own classrooms. Her study calls particular attention to the political nature of social studies content and the role of standardized tests in limiting the ideological content of the curriculum. She also offers yet more evidence that ambitious teaching occurs despite high stakes tests but also notes the limits of celebrating what happens behind the closed classroom door. She argues that teachers need to go public, to see their work as part of public discourse and to participate in policy debates about standardized testing and the construction of history curriculum.

Another strength of this collection is that it brings together studies of multiple state contexts. In some states, like New York, Virginia and Texas, the exams teachers faced were graduation requirements but in other states there are no high stakes exams in social studies. In these states, though not faced with an exam, social studies teachers must fight against the forces that threaten

their courses in terms of funding and in terms of maintaining a commitment to content. In these contexts, teachers face a different set of survival challenges. Yeager and Pinder's essay examine two teacher's responses to the dilemma of high stakes exams in literacy but not in social studies in the state of Florida. One teacher emphasized literacy development and felt free to explore social studies content she thought was important. Content seems an afterthought to literacy development, a message strongly sent by her school. Another teacher, in a different school, worked the other way and focused on content, bringing in literacy strategies later. They both sought to work within the state testing context, but with very different approaches. Both case studies suggest that the social studies curriculum is imperiled in a context where it is a secondary discipline. This study, along with several others, also suggests that school context is quite central in shaping responses to exams. One teacher felt comfortable with the practices being promoted in her school though the other felt compromised in part because the schools they worked in may have informed their general sense of efficacy. The pressures on schools, the way they are organized, evaluated and resourced influences the space in which teachers address and resist standardized tests.

Yeager and Pinder's essay, along with Segall's, broaden the discussion of what makes a high stakes testing environment. In both studies, where no high-stakes test in social studies existed, the authors make strong cases that their studies described high stakes contexts nonetheless because the state-testing regime was so influential in shaping teacher work. However, a few essays seemed out of place in the collection in this regard because they were not credible high stakes contexts. Gradwell's "Teaching in Spite of, Rather than Because of, the Test: A Case of Ambitious Teaching in New York State" and Bolgatz's, "Using Primary Documents With Fourth-Grade Students: Talking About Racism While Preparing for State-Level Tests" both offer rich description of ambitious teaching in a middle and elementary school respectively, but don't make a case that these are high-stakes contexts. Bolgatz described a unit she co-taught with a fourth grade teacher *after* the high-stakes 4th grade English Language Arts exam was over, and well before the 5th grade social studies exam (which does not impact promotion). Though the unit she describes was a wonderful example of the rich possibilities for social studies in the elementary school, the essay seemed out of place in this collection because there was only a general testing climate, not a palpable high-stakes context. Gradwell's essay also describes the work of a wonderful middle school teacher in a well-resourced suburban school where passing rates on the 8th grade history exam are high and where there is little administrative interference with her practice. With little anxiety over test performance on a test that does not carry heavy consequences, it is not surprising that teachers are able to enact ambitious teaching. Both essays, ironically the only two on the New York context where a long tradition of high-stakes exams exists, failed to make the case that they were examples of high-stakes testing contexts. In the breach then, the volume allows us to probe what constitutes a high-stakes testing context offering strong cases where no specific tests exist and some weaker examples where high-stakes tests abound.

As a whole, this collection offers a rich array of responses to testing regimes and complicates how we interpret the relationship between high-stakes exams and teaching practice. It also represents a growing field of research and offers some excellent examples of methodologies for getting at the unseen influences of tests. Despite these strengths, I was quite disappointed that no essay probed the achievement gap and issues of racial equity, particularly since it is a central focus of NCLB. Bolgatz's essay, whose inclusion I question above, was the only essay that explored the fate of anti-racist curriculum in testing contexts (and the only one to address the elementary level), which may clarify its inclusion. Additionally, no essays fully explored issues of equity and the role of tests in distributing resources. Perhaps this is work that still needs to be done and the essays in this collection offer methodological frameworks to further such efforts. The under representation of these issues is problematically addressed by Grant who argues in his closing essay that, "In many areas of schooling and life, such characteristics [urban/suburban/rural, gender, region, economic status and grade] matter considerably. They do not here." In fact, the essays in this collection actually suggest that the social context of schooling does mediate how tests are perceived and how

they impact the instructional landscape. These issues do matter in the discussion of high-stakes testing and instruction; they were just not probed here.

Despite these reservations, *Measuring History* offers new insights and greater depth to our understanding of how tests are shaping the teaching of social studies across the nation. The essays offer useful frameworks and methodologies to continue research into the complex relationships of policy, tests, teaching and teacher resistance. They move beyond the relatively simple exploration of whether teachers teach to tests to expose the ideological, contextual and ontological impacts of these policies. These essays recognize that beyond the explicit mandates that state tests impose there are implicit messages about what content matters, teacher professionalism, and the purpose of social studies instruction all together. They also raise the profile of teacher resistance and the many ways it mediates the impact of tests. Whether teachers resist in the privacy of their classrooms, as departments who insist on using the state's standards instead of the exam to inform their curriculum, or through open protest against the tests, the relationship between teacher practices and tests is dialogic; teachers talk back to these tests, they are not simply controlled by them.

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About the Reviewer

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