Racist Ordering, Settler Colonialism, and edTPA: A Participatory Policy Analysis

Eve Tuck¹ and Julie Gorlewski²

Abstract
This article tells the story of an intervention by a collective of teacher educators on New York State’s adoption of edTPA. Too often in education policy analysis, issues of race are discussed briefly, if at all. This article argues that attending to constructions of race specific to settler colonialism is an important approach to education policy analysis.

Keywords
edTPA, educational policy, policy analysis, racism, racist ordering, antiblackness, settler colonialism, racial justice, teacher education, schools of education, neoliberalism

In no small part, our analytical limitations can be traced to past solutions. Part of the difficulty is connected to our own victories: Today’s racial progress is heavily indebted to the state and its legal apparatuses, and for some populations, that is precisely the problem.

—Lisa Marie Cacho (2012, p. 4)

Educational policy scholars who work in Schools of Education may have the doubled, sometimes tripled, experience of having their professional lives turned upside down with a state’s adoption of a new education policy.

¹Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada
²State University of New York at New Paltz, NY, USA

Corresponding Author:
Eve Tuck, Department of Social Justice Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Room 12-246, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1V6.
Email: eve.tuck@utoronto.ca
Of course, critics have noted the creeping (up) of accountability measures, from K-12 classrooms, teachers, administrators, to the Schools of Education which prepare educators (Taubman, 2009). Concerns over neoliberal influences and racialized outcomes of education policy have drawn much focus in critical education scholarship for the better part of the last two decades manifesting in part under the banner of critical policy analysis (Young & Diem, 2014). It has been important to study and critique the problems of using market-based logics to guide what should be pedagogical decisions and to consider origins and explore the consequences of the socially constructed educational policies. Yet—though much of this scholarship comes from professors working inside Schools of Education—Schools of Education themselves have not been sites of contestation. Teacher educators, as a whole, have not pushed back against the neoliberal seemingly “color-blind” policies which have ravaged U.S. K-12 schools and teaching professions (Dixson, Buras, & Jeffers, 2015). This stance of relative compliance influences both policy and practice, as institutions represent the contexts in which future teachers learn about the political nature of their field (Lipman, 2013).

This article tells the story of an intervention by a collective of teacher educators on New York State’s adoption of edTPA, a policy adoption that concerned even the creators of edTPA (see Miletta, 2015). The edTPA is a standardized performance assessment newly required for teacher certification in several states, including New York (May, 2014), Washington (January, 2014), and Wisconsin (September, 2015; Participation Map, http://edtpa.aacte.org/state-policy). In addition, edTPA has been adopted for optional use in 34 states and the District of Columbia. Building on critical policy analysis coupled with critical race theory (Atwood & López, 2014; Young & Diem, 2014), this article provides an analysis of how race and racism are constructed or, rather, ignored in New York’s adoption of edTPA. As we discuss herein, this ignoring has consequences.

In describing the experiences of our research collective, we hope to illuminate these consequences by discussing the context of this policy implementation, the genesis and structure of our project, and how settler colonialism and antiblackness are interwoven into this tool of education policy. This article describes our creation of an alternative scoring consortium as a form of participatory critical policy analysis. The article then provides an extended discussion on our intervention’s analysis of racial formations, performing the connections between education policy analysis, settler colonialism, and antiblackness. We close with a call for more participatory policy analyses which theorize race in settler colonial nation-states, especially from faculty in Schools of Education.
We write as two teacher educators working in a public university School of Education before and during the adoption of edTPA. Our goal has been to enact another kind of policy analysis in two ways. First, we wanted to enact a participatory policy analysis, engaging in collective research on something which impacts our labor. We also wanted enact a different way of telling about our work, especially by attending to settler colonialism and antiblackness. Too often in education policy analysis, issues of race are discussed briefly, if at all. Usually, race is just another crosstab proffered as part of the performance of policy analysis. In this way, race is equivocated with other social categories, including gender and income; this equivocation is almost never useful for analyzing the racialization of people in a settler nation-state. Of course, one is never just racialized—we are also gendered, classed, and categorized according to language, immigration status, indigeneity, ability, and more, all at the same time.

Yet, our more enduring concern is how the performance of disaggregating for race ignores the need to more deeply consider what theories of race are being enacted through policy, thus reifying connotations of race as natural, inevitable, and permanent. It has been a central tenet of critical race theory that race is a social construct (Omi & Winant, 2014), an invention, a fiction with lived realities cultivated in and supported in part through public policies (Atwood & López, 2014). Black feminist legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) has emphasized the material effects of the social construction of race. Our article shows the utility of theorizing settler colonial constructions of race for analyzing education policy. As we describe below, taking seriously the projects of settler colonialism as they align to require particular constructions of race will inform policy analyses and where they can go.

Discussing the roles of race and racism in education policy is difficult because, ironically in U.S. society, calling someone a racist is an enormous offense, perhaps a slur. We say ironic because examples of interpersonal and institutional, intimate, and state racism abound. Another insight of critical race theory is that racism is an everyday occurrence; racism is “pedestrian rather than spectacular” (Holland, 2012, p. 3). Yet to point out racism, to say “this policy is racist” requires a mammoth burden of proof (Atwood & López, 2014). The instrument mandated by the policy at the heart of this article, edTPA, is the co-creation of a highly regarded education scholar who has been a champion of young people of color in public schools. Is this policy racist? Is the problem the way it has been adopted in New York State? Is any standardized test not racist? These are questions that are difficult to answer, because, as Jared Sexton (2008) has observed, almost “every attempt to
discern the elusive core of racism, to approach its shadowy secret, drives it further from view” (p. 27).

In many ways, the research that we describe sought to understand the roles of racism in New York State’s adoption of edTPA. We are especially interested in this adoption edTPA as an example of what Sharon Patricia Holland (2012) has called “racist ordering,” the constant attempt to align the world according to a particular racialized hierarchy (p. 19). The power to determine the order of the world is given to those who shape time; indeed what constitutes engagement or “relation is defined as those who shape time and those who stand outside it, as those who belong to your people and those who do not” (Holland, 2012, p. 18). Holland asks,

(W)hat happens when someone who exists in time meets someone who only occupies space? Those who order the world, who are world-making master—those animals and humans who are perceived as having no-world making effects—merely occupy space . . . We often talk of inequalities which emerge from black/white meeting, but we rarely understand those structural impediments and inequalities in terms of the phenomenological readings of time and space. (p. 10)

Holland is constructing Whiteness and Blackness in a specific way that holds much importance for our later arguments. Whiteness operates within a frame of time, whereas Blackness is only permitted to take up space. Holland poses key questions about commonly held assumptions about how racism works and what justice can mean. Whiteness (as having power over time and order) and Blackness (as merely occupying space) cannot be reconciled through “meeting” without changing the co-production of Whiteness and Blackness. We raise Holland’s theorizing of race and racism because it is spatialized; our discussion of settler colonial constructions of race in “Our Alternate Scoring Consortium” section also requires spatialized analysis. Yet, attending to settler colonialism pushes even Holland’s constructions, because thinking about settler colonialism requires us to think not only about space, but about land, specifically Indigenous land.

**Education Policy: Instantiating Racist Ordering**

Education policy in the United States today is perceived, developed, and enacted in ways that put Whiteness in the most powerful position of every racist ordering. White, primarily middle-class norms of language and culture, are consistently privileged in institutions of public education, regardless of the presence of teachers and students of color. In recent decades, neoliberal reforms have reinforced narratives that focus on outcomes and buttress
perspectives supporting an “achievement gap,” related to academic promise and education policies, rather than an “opportunity gap,” related to “job, wage, housing, tax, and transportation policies that maintain poverty” (Anyon, 2005, p. 66). The language of a “gap” at all, of course, is a reifying of the racist ordering so typical of U.S. education policy.

As measures of learning become increasingly standardized, what it means to be an educated person contracts. That policies are created and implemented through racist ordering means that many of the learners whose experiences of school are most negative are Black and Brown (Gillborn, 2005; Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 2001). Keisch and Scott (2015) note that “while there is indeed a growing state level and national movement against corporate education reform, it is essential that this struggle be centered in the fight for racial justice throughout society” (n.p., emphasis added). They identify three mechanisms of White supremacy through education policy: “the notion of ‘choice’ and charters, high-stakes testing, and discipline and criminalization” (Keisch & Scott, 2015, n.p.). Although these interrelate, our project focused on high-stakes testing, as edTPA provided an immediate example of this mechanism.

Standardized examinations have a long, well-documented history of justifying and reproducing discrimination (Au, 2009). Although cloaked in the guise of objectivity and swathed in the myth of meritocracy, high-stakes assessments are forms of racist ordering. As P. L. Thomas (2015) asserts,

The accountability era over the past thirty years—based significantly on standards and high-stakes testing—has not confronted and eroded race and class inequity, but in fact, and notably because of the central roles of standardized testing, race and class inequity has become even more entrenched in our schools and society . . .

The essential flaw with continuing to cling to high-stakes standardized testing is two-fold: (1) the tests are race, class, and gender biased, and (2) the demand that (educators) raise test scores keeps all the attention on outcomes (and not the policies and practices that create the inequity). (n.p.)

Thomas (2015) continues, “As such, the demand remains that black, brown, and poor children (and adults) are themselves flawed and must be ‘fixed’” (n.p.).

As we explain below, edTPA is consistent with many of the corporate education reforms which do little to reduce poverty yet focus on outcomes with funding consequences for low performance. The edTPA, on the surface, appears to be race neutral, as well as neutral with regard to class and first language. However, in practice, especially as it has been implemented in New York State, it disincentivizes teacher candidates from seeking student
teacher placements in high-needs schools. Even worse, it may communicate to teacher candidates that they cannot get certification if they work in classrooms with students of color, English language learners, and/or students living in poverty. This impression, accurate or not, will surely have consequences for how newly certified teachers in New York State perceive these schools and classrooms.

The edTPA in New York State

Prior to 2013-2014, Schools of Education and other teacher certification programs in New York State had the primary role in determining readiness for the classroom. In recent decades, teacher candidates in New York State have been required to complete an accredited program and be recommended by the program for licensure. In addition, they had to pass two examinations—one of which focused on pedagogical knowledge and the other related to specific content area knowledge relevant for their respective certification.

Claiming that the passing rate of these examinations was too low for such an important profession, and arguing that the related lack of teacher quality was a primary reason for failing public schools and the racially defined “achievement gap,” New York State officials kept the content test and implemented two additional assessments: the Educating All Students (EAS) test and the Academic Literacy Skills Test (ALST). Consistent with their role of standardized tests as mechanisms of exclusion (Au, 2009), examinations such as the content specialty test, EAS test, and the ALST have already proven to produce results that privilege White over non-White test takers.

To fulfill the conditions of New York State’s application for the federal Race to the Top grant program, which required evidence of tougher teacher certification examinations, New York State also implemented a fourth standardized assessment—a performance assessment called edTPA. Based on the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) used for teacher certification in California, edTPA (previously titled TPA) was developed by the Stanford faculty in cooperation with staff at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE). To facilitate administration and scoring of the assessment, SCALE partnered with Pearson, Inc. After a brief, partial (some certification areas were not part of the pilot program) pilot period, New York State mandated edTPA for candidates who complete requirements for initial certification after May 1, 2014. Candidates must submit to Pearson a series of two to five lessons, corresponding commentaries, and one to two videoclips reflecting 15 to 20 min of uninterrupted instruction. Tasks align with three areas: planning, instruction, and assessment. Submissions, which are commonly 30+ pages of text and supporting
materials composed by candidates in response to prompts, are scored in association with 15 rubrics.

Wrapped in the rhetoric of professionalism and quality, edTPA represents the normalization of teaching as a technical and apolitical act, of examinations as meaningful measures of complex acts and useful instruments for surveillance and discipline, and of relationships and local contexts as subordinate to distant, objective expertise. All these consequences are subsumed in discourses of equity, achievement, and teacher quality, with Black and Brown students in poor schools often described as the beneficiaries of examinations that will raise standards for teachers. Such consequences are rooted in policies that see teaching, learning, and knowledge as value-free and apolitical (Apple, 2000; Au, 2009; Ball, 1993). Neither knowledge nor the act of teaching is neutral or apolitical. What counts as knowledge, and how privileged knowledge is fostered and assessed, is largely promoted as natural, normal, and “common sense.” In practice, however, curriculum is contested and all teaching is political; gaps represent deficits in socially constructed norms, not the students to whom the disparities are assigned. Curriculum, like policy, is socially constructed, and unless interrupted, schooling works to reinforce existing power relations.

A performance assessment meant to be implemented during the student teaching experience, edTPA requires candidates to submit a portfolio that demonstrates effective teaching as defined by a series of prompts and evaluated by a set of rubrics. As teacher educators, we immediately recognized the likely consequences of this assessment, and our concerns were quickly borne out. As a result of this policy initiative, our institution allocated significant resources—including a full-time coordinator—to prepare faculty and students to earn passing scores on edTPA. Composing and organizing files to submit as part of the portfolio dominated the student teaching experiences, infiltrating interactions among candidates, mentor teachers, faculty supervisors, and college faculty. Precious time, energy, and resources were devoted to anticipating how scorers (who were hired, trained, and assigned by Pearson) might evaluate portfolios.

In a very real sense, edTPA intruded on our teacher education program, defining teaching in ways that constrained and reduced it to a series of technical, predictable, and visible acts. It encroached on faculty time, distracting teacher educators from scholarship and program planning. Moreover, the videoclip requirement raised additional concerns about which students in which classes would illustrate the kind of classroom that would result in a high score. Teacher candidates wondered aloud how student behavior that did not conform to White, middle-class, academic norms might influence scorers’ evaluations, especially as scorers would be unfamiliar with local contexts.
Thus, faculty members were justifiably worried that edTPA would have a chilling effect on candidates’ requests for student teacher placements.

**A Market Solution to a Constructed Problem**

Through organizing and participating in several on-campus and off-campus discussions about New York State’s adoption of edTPA, we listened to concerns raised by our colleagues and pondered them alongside our own concerns. We and our colleagues were displeased that Pearson, Inc., a for-profit company involved in textbook publishing, K-12 testing, and test preparation, and now the General Education Development (GED) test, was given the contract to administer and score edTPA in New York State. At the same time, many of our colleagues found the notion of a performance assessment to be compelling, especially because what gets called “disposition” in the literature is so difficult to teach and assess. Others found the notion of a performance assessment redundant—many Schools of Education already have effective performance assessment built into their programs: student teaching.

Learning from these discussions and talking with each other about what New York State’s adoption of the edTPA would mean for our own work as teacher educators, we (the authors) identified what we saw as three immediate and serious threats to our perception of teacher education:

1. Corporate involvement and wealth building that interferes with relationships central to teaching and learning,
2. Outsourcing of candidate evaluation away from teacher educators, and
3. The likelihood of differential results for different institutions, teacher education programs, and schools of education based on resources, as well as who is in the classroom (socioeconomic class and race).

All three of these threats relate directly to racist ordering. The focus on wealth building central to corporate control ignores the reality that relationships are developed in racialized cultural contexts. Reflecting the characteristics of Whiteness and perpetuating an institution built on and consistent with principles of settler colonialism, White teachers, in general, do not share the cultural experiences of the learners with whom they share classrooms—especially classrooms of children of color and/or living in poverty. Outsourcing evaluation by placing certification decisions in the hands of distant scorers calibrated through online corporate training further disregards local context. In addition, outsourcing discounts collaborative knowledge building, commitment to the complexities of the field, and capacities developed through...
experience. Privileging contemporary White, elite cultural norms through the normalization of mechanisms such as edTPA reinforces beliefs and assumptions that hinder the formation of authentic, dialogic relationships. Finally, differential results for teacher candidates and programs were a considerable concern; we anticipated that wealthy, private institutions would yield higher edTPA pass rates than public institutions (which have experienced reduced state funding since the 2008 economic crisis). Reducing the diversity of the teaching force is counter to aims of critical educators, as well as to the stated aims of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (The Washington Post, 2011), yet edTPA administration has already yielded results consistent with standardized evidence generation: White candidates generally score higher than non-White candidates. In short, edTPA is a policy initiative that represents a dangerous technology for narrowing and controlling the practice of teaching.

Beyond the three concerns outlined above, when a policy problem points so neatly to a politically expedient and profitable (for Pearson) solution, it is necessarily suspect. The development of this policy solution, in fact, represents an acceptance of the continuation, and even an intensification, of existing racist conditions. The edTPA is a policy initiative that addresses a wrongly posed question with a misguided answer (Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013). Ignoring historical and present inequities of opportunity and failures of public policies to address such inequities, edTPA presumes that the “problems” associated with educating Black and Brown learners can be addressed by raising the standards for their future teachers. Moreover, edTPA and similar certification assessments are built on faulty assumptions including that outcomes related to effective teaching are visible and measurable and that such outcomes are universally agreed upon and stable. Consistent with the frames of Whiteness with/in which they are developed, this orientation ignores histories of policies regarding Black people and adopts a present-centric perspective grounded in a problem–solution model.

As Alison Jones (2007) notes, the problem–solution orientation is central to the field of education. Jones argues that education has always been good at finding problems and solutions which suggest each other and suggests instead that educators embrace the interminability of struggle, and the ongoing engagement in conflict as a necessary aspect of diverse interrelations. Engagement, according to Jones, is more complex, meaningful, and useful than the problem–solution approach. Engagement implies connection, but it does not require compliance. In fact, engagement privileges the struggles that occur within relationships, because engagement is preferable to disengagement. She explains, we are engaged in a relationship. This has to be seen positively, given it is engagement, it is not disengagement. To struggle with another is to give active and proper attention to the other, to relate to the other.
Our Alternate Scoring Consortium

Experienced in participatory action research, we founded a research collective of teacher educators from across New York State to both document and interrupt these conditions. The prospect of allowing edTPA to define, not just for teacher candidates but also for practicing teachers and teacher educators, what it means to teach was anathema to our collective. Although some teacher educators embraced edTPA as a vehicle for professionalizing teaching, we worried that it would be the opposite: an instrument for transforming teaching into a series of measurable tasks that can be easily replicated.

In assembling a participatory research consortium with other teacher educators across our state (most of whom we had never met prior to the inception of the study), we aimed to foster new critical dispositions as a means of interrupting/intervening in hegemonic structures. Together, we learned and struggled to make sense of how edTPA worked to limit our own dispositions, as well as those of our teacher candidates.

Description of the Study

Our collective came together with the purpose of examining data generated by the edTPA to consider the assumptions embedded within the assessment as well as the potential consequences of its implementation. Research questions, developed collaboratively, included the following:

Research Question 1: What are the benefits and disadvantages of using tailored rubrics within a scoring consortium as compared with rubrics associated with the edTPA?

Research Question 2: What aspects of the teaching/learning process are privileged/marginalized by the edTPA?

Research Question 3: How do the scores produced by edTPA calibrated scorers compared with the scores produced by scoring consortium participants?

The collaboration involved creating and piloting an edTPA Scoring Consortium that served as an alternative to Pearson scoring. Project directors were Eve Tuck and Julie Gorlewski, and project participants involved teacher educators of various ranks from the following institutions: State University of New York at New Paltz, D’Youville College, Teachers College, City University of New York Graduate Center, New York Institute of Technology, Hunter College, and State University of New York at Cortland. The project incorporated both in-person and virtual collaboration.
Our group sought to confront the deleterious effects of standardized assessments, which have been shown to re-instantiate fictions associated with race and achievement. Moreover, we aimed to provide an opportunity to interrupt the hegemonic, deprofessionalizing nature of the policy implementation, which largely disregarded local faculty knowledge and displaced their labor. Finally, many teacher candidates required to participate in edTPA had expressed anxiety about the assessment; we hoped that the materials from our collective would offer participating teacher candidates a sense of critical reflection about a process that is otherwise opaque and disempowering. Candidates understood that faculty in our collective were advocating for change. At the very least, our efforts offered a model of how faculty could enact a critical approach to a policy mandate.

Together, with much discussion and deliberation, we developed our own innovative scoring tool to evaluate edTPA portfolios. We asked diverse teacher candidates who were submitting their portfolios to Pearson to also submit them to be scored using our tool, gathering five to 10 portfolios from each institution. We used our scoring tool to provide feedback on documents and videoclips that were electronically submitted.

We broke into small teams and scored submitted portfolios and then compared the results with Pearson-reported scorers. Our collaborative work explored how assessment processes inform, and are informed by, the contexts in which they are developed and implemented. The results of our participatory action research project highlight the social, cultural contexts in which teacher preparation and certification take place as well as the interrelations of power that influence decisions about who becomes a teacher, and who decides who becomes a teacher.

As researchers partnered in a collective analysis of a policy that had material effects on our own practice and on the future of our profession, we were explicitly cognizant of our critical stance and the importance of reflexivity. Although we developed an alternative scoring tool, we never sought to create a replacement for a standardized performance assessment; instead, we aimed to investigate how a research collective composed of teacher educators might evaluate materials submitted in response to a policy tool such as edTPA. Our project is an example of participatory policy analysis (Tuck, 2009), a form of participatory action research designed to understand and intervene upon policy by those most impacted.

Comparing Constructions of Race

In this section, we compare constructions of race in New York State’s adoption of edTPA with the constructions of race which guided our intervention
on the policy. We have written this discussion to perform a more thorough engagement with race and racism in educational policy analysis. In making this comparison, it becomes clear that the assumptions about race and racism which usually go unsaid in educational policy analysis are actually of great consequence.

Although there are clear racial implications of New York State’s adoption of edTPA, the theory or construction of race is difficult to identify. In many ways, this policy fits within what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006; and many others after him) has described as “color-blind” ideology. Although we will not go into much detail here, because Bonilla-Silva’s work has been so thoroughly engaged elsewhere; it is useful to consider two of the frames of “racism without racists” in relation to New York State’s adoption of edTPA: abstract liberalism and minimization of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 28). New York State’s adoption of edTPA enacts abstract liberalism because it includes no concrete safeguards against de facto racial inequality (among teacher candidates, Schools of Education, and classrooms). It enacts minimization of racism by standardizing the classroom contexts prompts and providing no specific language related to the potential roles of racism in classroom contexts (see also NAME position on edTPA). Bonilla-Silva’s discussion of the frames of racism without racists is clearly useful, but we want to go further than just describing New York’s adoption of edTPA as a color-blind policy.

edTPA is also an example of the “rhetorical force of race talk” that tries to take us to “that wonderful place called ‘beyond,’” (Holland, 2012, p. 17). The call to move to the beyond of race is a demand that we “divest ourselves of our preoccupation with the past” (Holland, 2012, emphasis in original) to get over race. As discussed in our introduction, according to Holland (2012), analysis of the rhetorical force of race talk means understanding the co-condition of Whiteness and Blackness with regard to time and space.

It is precisely because the black subject is mired in space and the white subject represents the full expanse of time that the meeting of the two might be thought of as never actually occurring in the same temporal plane; yet the desire to get over such a meeting is immediate and the recovery is often swift. Exactly how does one move beyond a nonevent? (p. 17)

In the presumption that performance assessments of teacher candidates can be standardized, New York State’s adoption of the edTPA reifies the dispossession of Black people (specifically) and people of color (broadly) as nonevent. There is simply no way for teacher candidates to put their performances in relation to “the meeting” of Black bodies in White temporalities, and to do so would likely guarantee failure of the assessment.
As noted, the conditions of the assessment tacitly encouraged teacher candidates to do student teaching in predominantly White, predominantly English language, and predominantly mainstream classrooms. Candidates in traditional teacher education programs must fulfill institutional degree requirements as well as state requirements to be certified. These requirements are further prescribed by dictates from accreditation agencies. Because the requirements are strict, teacher candidates’ plans of study are fairly rigid, allowing little space for electives or exploratory study. In New York State, they must complete all coursework prior to student teaching, fulfill 100 hr of fieldwork, and maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average. Fieldwork placements occur in settings in which mentor teachers volunteer, often with little or no compensation, so candidates are instructed to be appreciative and positive as they represent the institutional relationships between college and K-12 schools. Although they learn in coursework that education can be transformational, they are taught to be silent witnesses when engaged in fieldwork. All of these experiences inform student teaching, the setting in which edTPA is accomplished. Teacher candidates, then, enter the student teaching experience having learned to comply, rather than critique.

The edTPA is silent on issues of race and equity; however, this silence speaks volumes to teacher candidates who, in the absence of sound, hear “White” noise—or Whiteness. A high-stakes assessment whose result will affect whether their plan of study will result in certification, edTPA influences how candidates think about their placements even before they arrive. As noted, candidates we met expressed concern about being placed in high-poverty classrooms of color. Knowing they must submit videoclips as part of their edTPA portfolio and that scorers will judge them based on the behavior and achievement of their learners, candidates imagine the need to portray idealized classrooms filled with compliant, English-speaking, learners—and when they envision high-poverty classrooms filled with students of color, the images do not correspond to this manufactured ideal. When teacher candidates—and often their mentor teachers and college faculty—invent an image of a distant, Pearson-calibrated scorer, the image is corporate: White, conventional, a purportedly neutral backdrop to demonstrate effective teaching. Teacher candidates, during this incredibly formative point in the development of beliefs and dispositions, are thus being discouraged from wanting to work in high-poverty classrooms in communities of color, discouraged from forming relationships with such learners, and discouraged from imagining knowledge and expertise as inherent in these settings. What they are learning, implicitly, from edTPA is that those students are not worthy of time and effort: They are unteachable.

Thus, New York State’s adoption of edTPA is consistent with a “racist ordering” in which relations are “defined as those who shape time and those who stand outside it” (Holland, 2012, p. 18). To intervene on the racist
ordering of New York’s adoption of edTPA, our consortium endeavored to create an alternate scoring tool, designed to make issues of race and racism explicit in the performance assessment of teacher candidates. Recall from “Education Policy: Instantiating Racist Ordering” section that our consortium was created to intervene on three specific problems of New York State’s adoption of edTPA:

1. Corporate involvement and wealth building,
2. Outsourcing of evaluation away from teacher educators,
3. The likelihood of differential results (especially by race, language, and class) for different teacher education programs, based on resources, and who is in the classroom.

For us, investigating the “likelihood of differential results” (especially by race, language, and class) has meant engaging theorizations of antiblackness and Indigenous theorizations of settler colonialism. Whereas critical race theory has been influential with regard to theorizing race and racism in education and educational policy, attending to analyses of antiblackness and settler colonialism yield altogether different insights. The tenets of critical race theory noted in this article—that race is a social construct, and racism is an everyday occurrence—are deeply resonant. Yet, we contend that other understandings are revealed when we situate the constructedness of race in the United States within the logic and structure of settler colonialism. In particular, we believe that attending to settler colonial constructions of race allows for a nuanced understanding of dispossession that is simultaneously linked to Indigenous erasure and Black life as “no where” (Tuck, Guess, & Sultan, 2014).

**Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Erasure**

Settler colonialism is different from other colonial formations which focus on extractions of labor and resources: Often in addition to these extractions, settler colonialism is ultimately about the pursuit of land for settlement. Settler colonialism requires the destruction of Indigenous communities to clear the way for settlement. Through genocide, assimilation, appropriation, and state violence, Indigenous presence is erased. Settler colonial nation-states like the United States are founded on Indigenous erasure; settler colonialism is relentless, but never fully “successful” because of Indigenous resistance and survival (Vizenor, 1999). Indigenous communities have always resisted (and theorized) their dispossession. Indeed, Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014) writes that it has been the experience of dispossession, not proletarianization,
which has shaped the historical relationships between Indigenous peoples and the settler colonial nation-state. Settler colonialism, and Indigenous resistance to settler colonialism, has been organized around the question of land. Coulthard (2014) writes,

(R)e-establishing the colonial relations of dispossession as a co-foundational feature of our understanding of and critical engagement with capitalism opens up the possibility of developing a more ecologically attentive critique of colonial-capitalist accumulation, especially if this engagement takes its cues from the grounded normativity of Indigenous modalities of place-based resistance and criticism. (p. 14)

The ongoing structure of settler colonialism reduces human relationships to (Indigenous) land to relationships to (settler) property, making property ownership the primary vehicle to civil rights in most settler colonial nation-states.

**Settler Colonialism and Antiblackness**

In the United States and other slave estates, the remaking of land into property was/is accompanied by the remaking of (African) persons into property, into chattel (Spillers, 2003; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wilderson, 2010; see also King, 2014 on Black life as fungible).

To attend to the specificity of antiblackness and its fusing to Indigenous erasure through settler colonialism is to set aside the catchall term *racism*. It is to recognize that, as Holland (2012) observes,

(W)hen we see and say “race,” regardless of how much we intend to understand race as being had by everyone, our examples of racial being and racist targets are often grounded in *black matter(s)* In this instance, the black body is the quintessential sign for subjection, for a particular experience that it must inhabit and own all by itself. (p. 4, emphasis in original)

The remaking of land and bodies into property is necessary for settlement onto other people’s land. Discourses and practices of property and dispossession are central to the hegemonic relations of settler colonialism and slavery in the United States.

**Implications**

Thus, in our view, analyses of settler colonial disposessions are incomplete when they do not connect Indigenous erasure and antiblackness. Logics of
settler colonialism insist that Indigenous peoples disappear at the same time that they require Black life to be kept landless. Settler colonialism is a network of structures, narratives, and justifications which promote the ascendancy of settler ontologies, especially of property and state violence against Indigenous peoples and Black peoples. Frank Wilderson (2010) points to the antagonisms built into the ways that Indigenous peoples can access humanity and the ways that Black peoples are blocked from accessing humanity because of the ways that their relationships to land are differently structured in settler colonialism.

By attending to settler colonial dispossessions rather than theories of dispossession related to colorism or capital accumulation (alone), it is possible to see dispossession as not just material but always also connected to possible relations to place and land. In theorizing and using a settler colonial construction of race, we bring together the otherwise seemingly disconnected phenomena of Indigenous erasure and Black life as ungeographic (McKittrick, 2006; see also Tuck et al., 2014).

The full version of the alternative edTPA scoring tool that we created will soon be available as part of a book-length discussion of this study, but in service of this discussion, we share about one section, on social context. As noted, Pearson’s implementation and scoring of the edTPA ignored all aspects of race, class, or gender expression, even in a required section called Context for Learning. Because standardized evaluations also set standards/expectations, leaving out the prompt for teacher candidates to attend to issues of race and racism in their performance assessment materials devalues this type of reflection among new teachers.

In contrast, understanding that a scoring tool can have a normalizing power over discourse and practice, our scoring tool makes explicit reference to issues of race, dispossession, power, and privilege in the classroom. Our scoring tool evaluates the degrees to which diverse students/families are treated with respect; students’ lives are woven into the curriculum; the synergy between classroom community and students’ cultural communities is fostered; and multiple forms of intelligence and creativity are encouraged. In our scoring tool, teacher candidates are expected to address issues of representation, lived experience, connectedness, and dignity.

Our scoring tool, because it is informed by understandings of settler colonial constructions of race, emphasizes dignity and connectedness as practices which can be performed and observed. Our collective engaged in nuanced discussions about how these practices can be performed and observed, which always came back to how teachers meet students in place and time. Locating this meeting within a context of settler colonialism which is premised upon the erasure of Indigenous peoples and Black life as no where breaks open other questions, How to welcome without re-settling? How to communicate belonging without ownership? How to make place without disposessing others?
These are the types of questions that become possible when settler colonialism, Indigenous erasure and survivance, and antiblackness and Black resistance are imbued in educational policy analysis.

### Four Calls for Education Policy Analysis

What we hope readers will understand from this is that education policy analysis that just points to neoliberalism is not enough in terms of social explanation. Critiques of neoliberalism often take racism for granted, as an a priori condition of modernity. Thus, education policy analyses which culminate in a critique of neoliberalism can easily skip over the material effects of ongoing settler colonialism, how different bodies are differently racialized, and how those made other in race-based stratifications might otherwise relate to one another.

Policy “solutions” that result in technologies of assessment such as edTPA reify inequities related to fictions of race, racism, and antiblackness. In a sense, then, teacher education faculty who participate uncritically in the implementation of these policies perpetuate the fiction of race. Detractors might say that this is an overstatement, that it puts too much on both edTPA and Schools of Education. Indeed, the words race and racism do not appear in any edTPA materials or prompts. Yet, as Ruthie Wilson Gilmore (2015) reminds us of the status quo,

> What is the status quo? Put simply, capitalism requires inequality and racism enshrines it . . . Although it has become mildly mainstream to decry outrages against poor people of color, the new “new realists” achieve their dominance by defining the problem as narrowly as possible in order to produce solutions that on closer examination will change little. (n.p.)

The edTPA as it has been adopted in New York State is exactly a case in which the problem has been defined so narrowly that the “solutions” it will produce—teachers who have passed a standardized performance assessment without any occasion to reflect on the roles of race and racism in classrooms or schools—will change little to affect the everyday racist ordering of life in the United States.

Locating education analyses within a larger analysis of settler colonialism and antiblackness attends directly to the roles of race and racism in formation and implementation of policy. Leigh Patel’s (2015) recent work has raised useful questions about the prospects of ever securing what others refer to as “racial justice” (including Keisch & Scott, whom we quote above). Patel (2015) writes,

> Much as it would seem somewhat logical to seek redress of racialized violence and dehumanization through racial justice, that is exactly the kind of
wrong-headed remedy born of a society that is overly constricted by both race as a construct and loose ideas of justice. (n.p.)

Patel writes of race as an invention to *establish and maintain injustice*, and such an invention cannot be refashioned to establish justice. Patel (2015) disbelieves the notion that “fiction birthed to enact, meter out, and discipline human from inhuman can be the source of humanity.” Patel, reading the history of constructions of race as justifications for theft of Indigenous land and enslavement of Black people does not see race as a construct that can be redeemed. Instead, Patel (2015) urges us to disrupt that fiction, decenter Whiteness, and “focus on the humanity, the history, the psychology, the undeniable vibrancy, the embodied beingness of black and brown peoples.”

We close this article with four calls, messages out to the universe about what we hope to see from our colleagues and students who do education policy analysis:

A. We call for more participatory policy analyses among faculty in Schools of Education about education policy, especially policies which affect our teacher candidates, their students, and the terms of our labor. We encourage Schools of Education to counter analyses that preserve and reinforce solutions that focus on increasingly narrow interpretations of problems. We hope our colleagues will engage in collective investigations of policy origins, implementations, and consequences must explicitly address—and seek to interrupt—settler colonial logics. Critical policy analysis rooted in understandings of settler colonialism, Indigenous erasure and survivance, and antiblackness and Black resistance is a promising lens for beginning such work.

B. We call for a more robust theorizing of race in education policy analysis. Policy analysis that does not engage in theorizations of race serves to reify existing fictions about teaching, learning, and achievement. Ignoring race amounts to an acceptance of racism, antiblackness, and Indigenous erasure as natural and normal, as conditions related to an “achievement gap” that can be ameliorated by adopting conceptions of time and space consistent with Whiteness and neoliberal reason. Rather than disregarding race, we call for increased and intense attention to how race and racism are embedded in policy as written and enacted.

C. In particular, we call upon our colleagues to seriously contend with settler colonialism by combining an analysis of Indigenous erasure with antiblackness. When foundations of injustice are rhetorically disconnected rather than understood as related, they can be perceived as distinct, bounded by socially constructed categories. Such a conception reifies distinctions that lead to specific definitions of “problems”
that inevitably are traced to individual and cultural deficits. Contending with settler colonialism by attending to Indigenous erasure and antiblackness counteracts abstract liberalism through explicit consideration of how social constructions operate to maintain the status quo.

D. Finally, learning from Patel (2015), we call for education policy analysis that moves toward something more compelling than racial justice. Racial justice is not possible because it keeps in place the structuring of race as a given. We do not want to rely on a structure that is created to justify theft of Indigenous land and destruction of Black life as the source of anything that can look like justice.

These are not just calls out, but calls to ourselves, as we continue to intervene, and to consider what our interventions have meant. More is to come, always.

Acknowledgments
The authors acknowledge our co-researchers in the New York edTPA Alternative Scoring Consortium, including Lindamichelle Baron, Anne Burns Thomas, David Gorlewski, Deborah Greenblatt, Kiersten Greene, Laura Kaplan, Michelle Kelly, Kate O’Hara, Mariana Souto-Manning, and David Smukler.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests
The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding
The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References


**Author Biographies**

**Eve Tuck** collaborates with several different communities and community based organizations to ask and answer questions that matter for them. She uses participatory action research approaches to learn about the lived impacts of education and social policies. She also writes social theory about decolonization, Indigenous social thought, settler colonialism, antiblackness, politics of research, the significance of land and place in social science research, participatory research ethics, theories of change, and the imperatives of the academy.

**Julie Gorlewski** works with educators and community members to develop critical, culturally sustaining practices with curricula intended to foster meaningful learning. She uses case study analysis to enhance critical reflection and professional dispositions in pre-service and practicing teachers and administrators, and seeks to cultivate opportunities for contingent collaboration among culturally diverse constituencies. She is also coeditor of *English Journal*, a publication of the National Council of Teachers of English.