



**The Achievement Gap Initiative**  
**At Harvard University**

Opening Comments for the June 2007 Annual Conference

**Structures, Cultures, and Achievement Gaps:  
New Research with Implications for Public Engagement**

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Welcome to the Third Annual State-of-the-Research Conference of the Achievement Gap Initiative (AGI) at Harvard University. My co-chairs in this endeavor are Professors Richard Murnane of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Charles Ogletree of the Harvard Law School. They join me in thanking you for being with us today.

I want to begin by thanking Dean Kathy McCartney for her support and encouragement. I am also very grateful to Lisa Quiroz and her colleagues at Time Warner. Time Warner has funded this conference and helped support most of our other activities for the past year and a half. Next, my deep gratitude goes to Ann Ballantine and Anaide Nahikian, who handled all of the preparations for the conference with great thoroughness and dedication. They have been assisted by Stephen Hyde and his staff from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, who have also done their best to make this conference a success.

This year's conference builds upon last year's. So, for the sake of continuity and as a foundation for these two days, I will begin with a brief review of key findings and ideas from that conference. For more detail on what I am about to say, you can find videos of all presentations plus PowerPoint files and papers on the AGI website at <[agi.harvard.edu](http://agi.harvard.edu)>. We will post this year's material as well in the near future. Please feel free to spread the word that it's there.

**Reasons to be Hopeful that Progress is Possible**

Roland Fryer of Harvard's Economics Department opened last year's conference with findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS), Birth Cohort. The ECLS Birth Cohort is a large nationally representative sample of infants.

It offers our first opportunity to look across racial, ethnic, and social class background groups, to study mental functioning among infants just prior to their first birthday. The central finding that Fryer reported is that group-level differences in mental functioning among infants are extremely small. Children from White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian families appear to be distributed along the same bell-shaped curve, with virtually the same mean and the same degree of variation.

The bottom line is that racial patterns in the ECLS Birth Cohort support the view that group-level differences in mental ability are not present in infants and therefore are probably not genetically based. Fryer also reported, based on other sources, that racial test-score differences are present by the age of three. As I discuss a bit later, parenting practices are implicated.

William T. Dickens of the Brookings Institution presented additional evidence bearing on the question of genetic differences. Dickens and James Flynn of the University of Otago examined four different tests of cognitive ability administered from 1972 through 2002. For each test, they had measures of race and age for blacks and whites. What they found was clear evidence of narrowing over time. They estimated that the Black-White IQ gap narrowed by 25 percent between 1972 and 2002. In earlier work, Flynn found that average IQ levels rose during the twentieth century for the entire US population. If IQ was entirely genetic these findings would make no sense. Apparently, even IQ tests are skills tests, and skills are determined at least in part by life experience.

Following Dickens's presentation, I introduced one more piece of evidence that racial differences are not facts of nature. The National Assessment of Educational Progress Long-Term Trend assessment is the nation's only nationally representative test score series, calibrated to provide consistent comparisons across time. Between 1971 and 1988, the Black-White reading score gap for 17-year olds was reduced by sixty-two percent. The Hispanic-White gap on the same test was cut in half between 1975 and 1990. Over the same period, gaps were reduced in math for 17-year olds and in math and reading for 9- and 13-year olds, though the timing varied.

Some bad news is that progress stopped at the end of the 1980s. High school dropout rates stopped improving and class-cutting rates increased, at least for blacks. The early years of the present century have shown resumption of skill growth and gap narrowing for younger children, but 17-year olds remain below their peak at the end of the 1980s and gaps for this age group are not narrowing.

## Some Sobering Realities

Given the evidence for infants that Fryer presented, the findings on IQ gaps that Dickens presented, and the progress from 1970 to 1990 that I discussed, it makes no sense anymore, if it ever did, to use genetic excuses for not working hard to close achievement gaps.

Still, the gaps are large and daunting to confront, so hope can be difficult to sustain.

One source of hope has been reports from some advocacy organizations heralding the existence of high performing, high poverty, high minority schools, which they have asserted exist in rather large numbers. While he too is hopeful, Richard Harris, then of the University of Florida, presented evidence at last year's conference that such reports were overstated. By one set of criteria, a school could be labeled high performing if it ranked in the top third of schools in its state on either math or reading scores in a single grade in a single year. Using these criteria, 1 in 5 of high poverty, high minority schools in the nation met the standard for high performance.

When Harris set the requirement at two grades, in two subjects, for two years, the success rate dropped to 1 in 300 instead of 1 in 5. Among low-minority, low-poverty schools, 84 percent met the one-subject in one grade and one year criteria, but only 26.7 percent met the stricter 2-2-2 criteria. The latter finding, that only 26.7 percent of low-minority, low-poverty schools met the stricter standard makes clear that the targets in No Child Left Behind really are a "long-shot." Harris concluded that racial and socio-economic inequalities make NCLB accountability requirements unreachable for many schools.

Following Harris, I presented sobering evidence of a different kind from the Nation's Report Card, which like the Long-Term Trend Assessment, is a series from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The Nation's Report Card provides reading scores for 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 2002 and 1994, by their parents' education level. The sobering evidence is that, for both years, racial gaps for 12<sup>th</sup> graders are largest among the children of college graduates. Black and Hispanic 12<sup>th</sup> graders whose parents were college graduates, had reading scores in both years that were no better than for whites whose parents had stopped their education at high school (or before). Generally, Black and Hispanic teenagers lag whites by about four grade levels—their scores as 12<sup>th</sup> graders are comparable to Whites' scores as 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

Achievement disparities contribute to, but do not entirely explain, differences in high school dropout rates. Robert Balfanz of Johns Hopkins University spoke at the conference about the nation's most troubled high schools and their exorbitant dropout rates. He reminded us, based on his own prior work, that 15 percent of the nation's high schools produce about half of its dropouts. Further, he reported that nearly half of all Black and Latino students attend high schools where graduation is not the norm. Janet Quint of MDRC added to the discussion of dropouts, presenting evidence that failure to complete the 9<sup>th</sup> grade on time is a very strong predictor of dropping out, even among students with relatively high test scores.

Shifting our attention to the state level, Goodwin Liu of Boalt Law School at the University of California at Berkeley presented evidence of large inequalities between the states in both test performance and expenditures per capita. New Jersey ranked number one in expenditures per capita, at \$11,800 in 2001-02. Utah ranked last, at \$4,500, just behind Arizona and Mississippi at \$5,000. Mississippi also had the lowest 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading scores, while Massachusetts had the highest (NAEP).

When he examined the operation of the Federal Title I program for disadvantaged children, Liu discovered a regressive pattern. Rich states got more than their fair share and poor states got less. For example, Massachusetts, a relatively affluent state and the highest scoring in the nation, received 137 percent of the national average for Title I aide per eligible child in 2003. The same year, Mississippi received 95 percent of the same national average. Florida received 84 percent while Arizona received 74 percent.

Further, using a cost-adjusted spending measure, Liu showed that spending is higher in states with larger percentages of White children. Whites represented 70.2 percent of students in states from the top third of the cost-adjusted spending ranking, but only 49.3 percent in states from the bottom third. Note that this is a statement about patterns between states, and should not be confused with the pattern within states, upon which Liu did not comment.

He proposed that there should be national standards for student proficiency and that federal aid formulas should be fixed to make the allocation of aid to states more fair. He offered specific ideas for design and implementation, but I will not review them here.

Finally, there is one more sobering reality to report. Recall our aspiration that scores should rise for all groups while gaps are narrowing. Charles Clotfelter of Duke University presented a paper coauthored with Helen Ladd and Jacob Vigdor.

They used data from North Carolina to examine patterns of score growth and gap narrowing over time. The good news is that both Hispanics and Asians tended to narrow score gaps relative to whites between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. The more sobering but not entirely bad news is for blacks. Clotfelter and his colleagues found that where black achievement rose, white achievement tended to rise as fast or faster, leaving the gap unchanged or widened. Similarly, Erik Hanushek and Steven Rivkin shared a paper for the conference using Texas data. They found that the Black-White gap narrowed between 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades for below-average students, but widened for high achievers, leaving blacks more under-represented in the top half of the achievement distribution. A major part of the explanation was that white high achievers were attending more effective schools.

### **Parenting Practices and Home Life Styles**

Several presenters last year identified specific, apparently consequential racial differences in parenting practices and home lifestyles. Richard Murnane of the Harvard Graduate School of Education presented evidence from a study he co-authored with John Willett, Kristen Bub and Kathleen McCartney. Their data came from the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD). One of their findings concerned scores on a mother-child play task that was designed to capture the mother's emotional and instrumental support of the child during a collaborative task. The scores were measured when the child was 6 months and 15 months of age. They helped predict success in elementary school, controlling for other family background variables. Specifically, net of the effects of observed socio-economic status indicators, they predicted one-third of the Black-White gap in math and English skills at the beginning of kindergarten and one-quarter of the gaps at the end of third grade.

Jelani Mandara of Northwestern University presented at the summer conference and also at an evening forum that we hosted during the school year. Black parenting is a focus of his research. Using the mother-child sample of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, he studied how various characteristics of families and parenting predicted test scores during early adolescence. He measured parenting practices when the child was ages 5 to 10. Controlling for other child and family characteristics, he used these parenting practices to predict subsequent test scores during early adolescence. He classified parents along two dimensions; one is warmth/responsiveness/attention, and the other is structure/demandingness. Being either above or below average on these two dimensions corresponds to four parenting styles (i.e., high-high, high-low, low-high, and low-low). Perhaps his most important finding was that, *within each racial group*, test scores were highest among

children whose mothers were above average on both dimensions. Whites were more concentrated than other groups in this high-high category and this helped predict the test score gap between whites, on the one hand, and Blacks and Hispanics, on the other.

Concerning home learning conditions, I presented data at the conference based on a large sample of elementary school students. All attended schools in the Tripod Project for school improvement, which I founded several years ago. Roughly one quarter attended schools in central city districts and the rest in towns and suburbs across several states. The data showed that Black and Hispanic students did less leisure reading at home compared to Whites and Asians, watched television more, were much more likely to have televisions in their bedrooms and more prone to be sleepy at school. Blacks and Hispanics also report fewer books in the home. For example, college educated Black mothers in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey Kindergarten Cohort reported about the same number of books in the home for their kindergarten child as did white mothers with no more than 12 years of schooling.

Rick Weissbourd of the Graduate School of Education was another speaker who addressed parenting. He talked about the importance of parent-child conversations and a program that he founded to help enrich home language environments in high poverty neighborhoods. The program was successful at attracting immigrant participation from the Haitian and Ethiopian communities, but not US-born Blacks and Hispanics. He speculated that concerns about “cultural imperialism” may have been barriers. He also discussed what he called the “steady drizzle of helplessness and hopelessness” that some low-income, non-immigrant parents of color experience.

Immigrant families were the focus for presenter Vivian Louie, also of the Graduate School of Education. She reported that 1-in-5 American youth aged 0-to-18 and 1-in-4 low-income youth are the children of immigrants. Further, by 2015, they will likely make up 30 percent of the nation’s K-12 population. The main point of her discussion is that the availability of information and social capital matters greatly and differs dramatically across different segments of the immigrant population. She described the dense social networks in the Chinese community in New York City and the ways that they use these networks to share strategies for getting their children into the most effective schools and supporting them. She contrasted this with Dominican immigrant and Native Puerto Rican strategies. The later groups tend to lack of information about high performing public schools and some immigrant children from these communities frame K-12 schooling as “being on your

own.” For these latter groups, community level supports can be especially important in supplementing the knowledge and strategies that the parents and their networks provide.

Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, both professors at New York University, also spoke about immigration and immigrant children. They have recently completed a multi-year study of immigrant children in Boston and San Francisco who were aged 9 and 14 at the beginning of the study. The Suarez-Orozcos followed these youth for five years, documenting continuities and discontinuities in their educational attitudes, behaviors and grades. Their analysis identified five academic performance pathways: one that began with high grades and remained high; one that began with low grades but ended high by the end of five years; and three that began at various levels but all declined. The variables that predicted which trajectory a young person followed were essentially equivalent to those in much of the literature on youth development more generally, but with a few twists peculiar to immigrant youth. For example, less successful youth failed to become well integrated with American-born peers who could help them practice language skills and become established socially. Parental capacities mattered as well, in the ways that Vivian Louie described.

Collectively, the presenters who touch on parenting, including in the context of immigrant youth, provided reasons to believe that parenting contributes importantly to achievement gaps and should be a prime target for efforts to foster improvement. This applies even among the children of the college educated.

## **Peers**

Roland Fryer presented evidence that youth of color in racially integrated schools suffer a popularity penalty for getting high grades. Fryer finds no popularity penalty for whites who get high grades. However, for students of color, this penalty appears to set in below a grade of B for Hispanics and around B+ for blacks. Fryer’s measure of popularity for any given student is based upon the number and popularity of the other students who list that student as a friend. Fryer interprets the fact that Black and Hispanic suffer such a penalty as evidence that other students regard them as “acting white.”

My own data from the Tripod Project include a more direct question about the “acting white” phenomenon. It asks for how frequently the following is true, “At this school, people like me get accused of acting white.” My findings offer some support for Fryer’s interpretation. However, the apparent popularity penalty

associated with high grades appears to be due to correlations between high grades and elements of personal style, rather than grades. In predicting who gets accused of acting white and how frequently, my work shows that getting high grades is less important than how frequently one speaks proper English in informal settings, the music one likes, and how one relates to strangers. High grades are okay. Being perceived as “acting white” is not the same as being regarded as a nerd.

John Bishop of Cornell University presented a paper co-authored with his son Michael, a student at the University of Chicago. The paper was entitled, “Oppositional Cultures among White Students: the Quest for Popularity and Normative Hegemony in American Secondary Schools.” The Bishops document a substantial amount of peer harassment among white students, with more of it targeted at the top and bottom of the ability distribution than at the middle. Based on their findings, the Bishops caution that attention to oppositional cultures and peer harassment should be targeted to all racial groups.

## **School Reform**

Several speakers addressed whether schools can improve in ways that raise achievement levels and narrow achievement gaps. The bottom line answer is yes. However, all indicated that the results from any particular effort will depend upon the scope and intensity of the intervention and the quality of teachers and teaching.

Jason Snipes, formerly of MDRC and now of the Council of Great City Schools, reported on work that he did with the Council while still a researcher at MDRC. That work compared political and administrative features of some large urban districts that had managed to raise achievement and narrow racial gaps, with some others that had failed to make progress. In the districts where progress was not happening there was:

- Political Conflict and a Lack of Focus on Achievement
- Lack of Instructional Coherence
  - Multiplicity of Teaching Initiatives and Curricula
  - Lack of Alignment With Standards
- High Student Mobility
- Inexperienced Teaching Staff
- Low Expectations and Lack of a Demanding Curriculum
- Unsatisfactory Business Operations

Where scores were rising and gaps narrowing, there was a:

- Culture of Accountability and Administrative Infrastructure to Support It
- Focus on Low Performing Schools
- Move Towards Instructional Coherence
- Data Driven Instruction and Decision-Making
- Initial Focus on Elementary Schools
- Increased Focus on Efficiency of “Business Operations”

Each city where progress was happening had gone through a period of crisis that resulted in a reorientation of how the school board, the superintendent, and school-level personnel worked together. Further, in each case, the political struggles to support change were ongoing.

Janet Quint is a researcher at MDRC. Her presentation summarized findings from rigorous evaluations of three comprehensive and effective high school reforms targeted at inner-city schools. Based on the reform models and the MDRC evaluation work, she listed the following five challenges of effective high school reform:

- Creating a personalized learning environment.
- Assisting students who enter high school with poor academic skills.
- Improving instructional content and pedagogy.
- Preparing students for the world beyond high school, and
- Stimulating change.

The bottom line conclusions from the evaluations were that:

- Changes in structure enhance personalization.
- Changes in instruction are needed to improve student achievement, and
- Career awareness activities and work internships in high school boost postsecondary earnings.

Improvements in social supports and personalization were not generally enough to raise achievement in the absence of real improvements in instruction, often accompanied by more time on task for students. Well-designed curricula, including some lesson plans already developed, and training to help teachers make good use of such materials appeared important for improving instruction. Quint ended her presentation by asserting that, “We DO know something about what works to improve low-performing high schools, we need to Do it.” At the same time, she offered some cautions:

- In deciding whether to adopt a comprehensive model or add onto existing efforts, administrators need to consider what is already in place and the capacity of local personnel.
- Strong district support promotes effective implementation and continuity.
- Reform takes time, so “staying the course” is important.
- High ambitions need to be combined with reasonable expectations; even small impacts can be important.

Janet Quint’s comments resonated well with what Robert Balfanz had to say about the Talent Development model during his presentation at the conference. Balfanz and his colleagues had designed the model. It became one of the reforms that MDRC evaluated and upon which Quint reported. Balfanz described the extraordinary challenges of implementing this comprehensive reform in one Baltimore secondary school. Similarly, Edward Deci from the University of Rochester delivered a presentation on the “First things First” program, another of the reforms upon which Quint spoke in the context of the MDRC evaluation work. Deci described an elaborate plan for expanding the program and conducting research in the process.

Charles Payne, then of Duke University and now at Northwestern, built on comments by others, especially Robert Balfanz, to emphasize the extreme difficulty, but not the impossibility, of turning around deeply troubled schools. Payne is a qualitative researcher who has spent many years studying schools in Chicago. He asserted that one third of Chicago schools, especially high schools, are fundamentally demoralized. They need intensive, comprehensive, and sustained assistance. Reporting on the history of reforms that he has studied, he said, “Time and time again the reformers did not understand how much time it was going to take.” Making essentially the same point, he also asserted, “We get into situations where failure is over-determined.” Payne asserted that there are practitioners with expert knowledge of how to work effectively in what he calls “toxic environments.” He says the research community should be more focused on harvesting their insights. He proposed that the AGI should host a conference focused narrowly on the implementation of school reform.

### **Quality Teachers and Teaching**

Thomas Kane of the Graduate School of Education and Brian Jacob of the Kennedy School of Government made presentations on the importance of quality teachers and the challenges of identifying them. Kane reported results showing that teachers differ in their effectiveness at producing learning gains in the classroom and

that these differences are relatively stable even in the early years of teaching. Student gains measured in a teacher's first two years of teaching predict performance by that same teacher's next cohort of students in the following year. Kane suggested some implications for teacher selection and tenure rules.

Brian Jacob reported findings on how well principals can judge teacher effectiveness. He found that principals could distinguish the top twenty percent from the bottom twenty percent, but could not make distinctions among the middle sixty percent. Jacob described work that he and Tom Kane were doing in New York City to build on these findings.

Finally, I presented findings from my own work on how the quality of instruction as judged by a student's classmates predicts that student's behavior and other aspects of his or her academic engagement in the class. The analysis used data for thousands of students who had been surveyed in multiple classrooms. It was structured to explain why the same students who are highly engaged in one classroom may be relatively disengaged in another. In standard deviation terms, the largest effect of quality teaching was on student behavior and black students were the group most affected.

### **College Access and Success**

One presentation at the conference dealt directly with college access and success. In that presentation, Bridget Terry Long of the Graduate School of Education discussed a rich combination of her own and others' rigorous work on this important topic. Briefly stated, she presented findings that:

- Remedial college courses do indeed help raise college achievement;
- Unmet financial need has large negative effects on college completion; and
- The keys to college success are academic preparation, finance, and timely and accurate information.

### **Out of School Time (OST)**

Heather Weiss of Harvard and Edward Gordon of Columbia University both spoke about the importance of not counting on schools alone. Weiss uses the phrase, "Complementary Learning Supports," to encompass all of the family and community level supports available to supplement what schools can achieve. She compared the time spent in school to that spent outside and pleaded that we should use this outside time more effectively for learning and youth development. Weiss listed

multiple constituencies that are joining the out-of-school-time cause. She cited the growing evidence base (including some meta-analyses) that out-of-school-time programs, if well designed and implemented, can produce both academic and nonacademic benefits. The problem, she said, is access for low income children and children of color, especially Hispanics. Comparing Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics, she reported that Whites tend to have the most access to such programs and Hispanics the least, with Blacks in the middle. She ended by predicting that over the next twenty years we are going to blur the line between school and OST programs.

Ed Gordon shared Heather Weiss's concerns and priorities, but made his points using somewhat different language and with different emphases. He talked about what he called "supplementary learning" and distinguished it from what most people mean by out-of-school-time programs. He emphasized that supplementary learning occurs through all of the many types of experiences through which children grow and develop. These include not only after school programs, but also visits to doctors offices, conversations with parents and interactions with other adults in parents' social networks.

Finally, I had asked Gordon to offer an answer to the question, "Why should we think we can do this?" by which I meant, raise achievement for all types of children while dramatically narrowing achievement gaps. His response to my request was to list a variety of instances over the last few hundred years where a society or some segment of a society had decided to launch an "affirmative development" effort to deliberately develop the talent of some identified group of people. He cited the settling of Australia and its subsequent development as well as examples from the US reconstruction period and the G.I. Bill after World War II. He also cited examples where supposedly under-qualified people were mistakenly assigned for training, but then developed and performed as though there was no mistake. What all of these instances had in common, he said, whether on purpose or by accident, was the deliberate, affirmative development of human talent.

### **Balancing the Narrative**

In separate presentations, John Diamond, Mica Pollock and Glenn Loury reminded us that we are participating in the creation of a narrative for the achievement gap movement. That narrative will affect the extent to which people understand the challenge as one of social justice, to be addressed by the entire society, school performance, to be addressed by public school systems, or personal responsibility, to be addressed by the children, families and leaders of particular communities. The narrative will affect responses to the ideas we promote and the

degrees to which those ideas motivate people to become involved in positive change. Diamond, Pollock and Loury warn us that a narrative focused too narrowly on culture and behavioral deficits ignores social injustices and releases the broader society from any responsibility to participate in change.

Stated differently, we need explicitly to acknowledge and seek to understand the societal culture within which the sub-cultural phenomena we sometimes deplore seem to fit like pieces of a puzzle. Such explicit contextualization, Diamond and Loury argued, will increase the likelihood that elites and policy makers will see their roles and use their resources for reforming institutions, revising policies, and resisting informal biases. Further, as John Diamond put it, failure to acknowledge injustices, hurts and struggles may make our prescriptions for cultural change by those on the bottom of the hierarchy seem disingenuous. Diamond's work aims to identify social structural, institutional, and symbolic disadvantages that need to be acknowledged and addressed in both our narratives and our strategies for closing achievement gaps.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, when I reviewed the presentations from last year and thought about what we are trying to achieve, five words that came to mind are *urgency*, *subtlety*, *difficulty*, *sensitivity*, and *possibility*. *Urgency*, because we only have one chance to raise each child and how well we do it really matters; *subtlety*, because common sense just scratches the surface of what we need to understand and is sometimes even wrong; *difficulty*, because we often lack the capacity and patience to do what *we know* we should; *sensitivity*, because the way that we frame this challenge can make so much difference to how other respond to it; and *possibility*, because past and present successes show clearly that communities *can* develop capacity, adults *can* reorder their commitments, and children *can* develop in ways that amaze us.

Our role as researchers is to help produce, digest, distill, and widely disseminate a knowledge base upon which a movement can be built. This talk has reviewed what we learned last year. This year's program is a direct response to the issues and themes that last year's speakers raised. The time has come to begin the first panel.

## SUMMARY

### **Reasons to be Hopeful that Progress is Possible**

- Minimal between-group differences among infants—we start from the same place.
- Black-White IQ gaps are smaller than in the past.
- NAEP trends showed dramatic gap narrowing between 1970 and 1990, showing that rapid progress is possible.

### **Some Sobering Realities**

- Most high poverty, high minority schools score very poorly.
- Racial gaps are largest among children of the college educated.
- 15 percent of high schools produce half of our dropouts and children of color are heavily concentrated in these schools.
- There are large disparities between states, with poor states tending to score lower and receive less federal aid on a per student cost-adjusted basis.
- Schools where scores rise for all groups while gaps get narrower are not as common as we might like.

### **Parenting Practices and Home Life Styles**

- Mother-child interactions during infancy help predict test scores in early elementary years and help explain achievement gaps.
- Parenting practices (warmth and demandingness) during early school years help predict test scores during early adolescence and help explain achievement gaps.
- Compared to Whites and Asians, Black and Hispanic children in elementary school report less leisure reading at home, fewer books at home, more television watching, more televisions in bedrooms, and get sleepier at school.
- Low-income immigrant families in one program were more responsive to advice on parent-child communication than were parents born in the US.
- Immigrant families of different nationalities differ in access to social capital and this produces differential access to information about school quality and services for their children.

### **Peers**

- Black and Hispanic students who get the highest grades may suffer a popularity penalty, with fewer peers listing them as friends.
- There is some evidence that the popularity penalty may be associated more with the “racial authenticity” of personal styles among some high achievers

(speech styles, music preferences, trusting attitudes) than with their achievement levels or aspirations, *per se*.

- There is opposition to hard work and “nerdy” behavior even among white students and racial differences in this domain appear to be minimal.

### **School Reform**

- Even for troubled high schools, we have rigorously evaluated models of school reform that have worked in some places.
- Deep reform in dysfunctional schools takes more time that is often allotted and stronger leadership than is often available.

### **Quality Teachers and Teaching**

- Some teachers are better than others at producing learning gains and the differences are detectable within the first few years of teaching.
- Principals can identify the very best and the very worst teachers, but are not good at distinguishing among the others.
- Students respond to high quality teaching and are more engaged in classrooms where the quality of teaching is higher.
- Black student behavior and sense of efficacy seem more responsive to quality teaching than is true for other racial groups, though all groups are responsive.

### **College Access and Success**

- Remedial college courses do indeed help raise college achievement.
- Unmet financial need has large negative effects on college completion.
- The keys to college success are academic preparation, finance, and timely and accurate information.

### **Out of School Time (OST)**

- Constituencies in support of out-of-school time opportunities (what Weiss calls “Complementary Learning”) are growing.
- Programs tend to produce results if they are well designed and well implemented, but not otherwise.
- Low income children and children of color (especially Hispanics) often lack access.
- What Gordon calls “Supplementary Learning” should be understood and cultivated as more than OST programs, including all types of experiences outside school that enhance talent development.

### **Balancing the Narrative**

- Narrative frames affect who accepts responsibility and what actions they feel inclined to take.
- Focusing too narrowly on culture and behavioral deficits ignores social injustices and releases the broader society from shared responsibility.
- There are structural, institutional, and symbolic advantages and disadvantages associated with race and class.
- Successfully achieving cultural and behavioral change may require acknowledging the injustices, hurts, and struggles.

### **Conclusion**

- *Urgency*, because we only have one chance to raise each child and how well we do it really matters;
- *subtlety*, because common sense just scratches the surface of what we need to understand and is sometimes even wrong;
- *difficulty*, because we often lack the capacity to do what *we know* we should;
- *sensitivity*, because the way that we frame this challenge can make so much difference to how other respond to it; and
- *possibility*, because past and present successes show clearly that communities *can* develop capacity, adults *can* reorder their commitments, and children *can* develop in ways that amaze us.