

**African American Academic Achievement:
Let's Talk about Race
By Rich Majerus**

Introduction:

*“Racism is man’s gravest threat to man - the maximum of hatred for a minimum of reason”
-Abraham Heschel.*

Racism has existed in America since the country’s inception. The racial achievement gap in American education is often viewed as a product of this history of racism in conjunction with modern manifestations of prejudice and discrimination. These larger structural and social issues, such as racism and socioeconomic disparities, are often displaced onto individuals: “African American students lack the motivation to achieve academically” and “African American parents lack the devotion to be involved in their children’s educations.” This problem of displacing social and economic societal realities onto individuals substitutes one cause of the achievement gap with another instead of recognizing both. Recognizing that racism exists and has a powerful impact on education is the first step to eliminating the achievement gap. Secondly, an intervention must be developed to remedy the disconnect between common African American interpretations of racism and reactions that are conducive to academic success. As Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun said, “In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way. And in order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently.”

The attack on the racial achievement gap can not come from just one angle, for the causes of the racial achievement gap are complex and require an equally complex solution. This solution must account for both structural causes of the gap and the reactions to these causes, which perpetuate the gap. The racial achievement gap was narrowed significantly in the 1970’s and 80’s as black students’ test scores increased at a much greater rate than those of white students (See Appendix II). These gains came largely as a result of increased educational opportunity beginning in the 1960’s. (Grissmer). However, the achievement gap became a prominent political issue in the 1990’s as the narrowing trend leveled off. Levels of minority students’ academic achievement are now analogous to what they were ten years ago (Grissmer). Even more troubling is the fact that the gap in achievement among races only widens further once students enter schools, which directly

indicts the structure of schooling in our country as one of the causes of the achievement gap (See Appendix IV). “Unfortunately, students who start out with disadvantages often encounter school conditions that only add to the problem. They are more likely to attend schools with inadequate funding ...[where] teachers often have low expectations of these students, leading them to have low expectations for themselves” (Educational 1). As a result of this compounded problem only “1 in 100 African American 17-year-olds can read and gain information from specialized texts—such as the science section in the newspaper...[and] only 3 in 10 African American ...17-year-olds have mastered the usage and computation of fractions, commonly used percents, and averages” (Haycock 8). The achievement gap should be attacked through reforms that address this current underachievement by recognizing the history and effects of racism and socioeconomic disparities in conjunction with addressing the school factors and manifestations of racism that perpetuate the gap.

Learned Inferiority:

“There is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality”
-Abraham Lincoln

This trend of academic underachievement in the African American community is a learned problem. The achievement gap did not simply develop because African American students and parents simply don't care, but rather it persists since they have systematically been taught not to value the American education system and the knowledge that results from advancement through it. It is hard to value an education system that “defines...[one's] culture as deviant” and devalues the achievements of that culture (Turner 8). Nevertheless, in a recent study, it was found that the mothers of minority children actually consider “homework, competency testing and a longer school day” more important to increasing a student's educational achievement than do mothers of white children (Stevenson). These parents are clearly concerned about their children's education. However, the concern of parents are often trumped by African American students' perception “that the majority culture sees them as less capable and expects little of them. These students may not try in school, since they believe they won't succeed anyway” (Educational 1). The difficulty created by low expectations is compounded further by external influences, such as poverty, which over 90% of African Americans will endure for a year or 2

more and institutional racism in establishments beyond just schools, such as health care and criminal justice organizations (Everding 1).

There are certainly factors beyond students' control, which are currently limiting their academic achievement (See Appendix I). Imagine, if you will, going to a job every day and working, knowing full well that you have slim hope of advancement. Now add in that your salary doesn't afford you the opportunity to see the doctor about your ailing back and barely allows you to put food on the table. Your boss views you as incompetent and assigns you rote, repetitive tasks, like filing and collating papers. Your job has no connection with your life outside of work and appeals to none of your interests. Now, get up and go to work! This is what we are asking many African American students to do everyday. African American children often go to school hungry, find few meaningful and challenging tasks at school and endure the low expectations of teachers. "In high-poverty urban middle schools, for example, we see a lot of coloring assignments, rather than writing or mathematics assignments. Even at the high school level, we found coloring assignments. 'Read *To Kill a Mockingbird*,' says the 11th grade English teacher, 'and when you're finished, color a poster about it.'" (Haycock 8). Regardless of the greater economic and social circumstances that afflict some African American urban students they are capable of achieving, if educators hold high expectations for them. The socioeconomic context of students' lives should only impact the educational plan that educators enact in their classrooms and schools to foster high achievement and not the level of expected achievement.

Affirming Agency:

"We can go on talking about racism and who treated whom badly, but what are you going to do about it? Are you going to wallow in that or are you going to create your own agenda?" -Judith Jamison

There is an overemphasis on the cognitive constraints that racism and poverty place on minority students and subsequently on cognitive, factual and rote methods in classrooms as well as in interventions to close the achievement gap. Instead we, as a nation, should look more deeply at the diversity of cultural realities that racism has created in our country, at the various interpretations of these realities, which lead to different outlooks and motivations concerning educational achievement, and at academic interventions that embrace and

build on successful and achievement based interpretations of these realities. African American students should be viewed as the active creators of their educations, rather than the passive receivers, whose abilities are limited by external forces.

Traditionally, the theoretical conjecture concerning the achievement gap has viewed it as a result of “socioeconomic status, school policies, allocation of human and material resources, and classroom instructional practices” (Bol 33). As a result, “there is very little discussion regarding the academic potential of African American students...[as most approaches to the achievement gap] focus primarily on the role of social and economic barriers shaping the academic attitudes of African American students” (Caldwell 32). Subsequently, many interventions and solutions have not considered the “unique cultural, social and psychological factors” of African American students (Caldwell 32). These three factors must be considered in a dynamic interaction with the traditional inequality explanations. “African Americans have cognitive, learning and motivational styles which are different from those fostered in the schools” (Turner 6). The cultural, social and psychological interpretations of traditional inequalities, which influence learning styles, are equally powerful and responsible for perpetuating the achievement gap and therefore any solution must entail an acknowledgment of and a respect for the educational agency of African American students.

In this way, interventions for the achievement gap must recognize racism and not simply be policies of racial neutrality, but at the same time these interventions must embrace the social fact that African American students are not at the mercy of a racist culture. African American students are not paralyzed by racism. “Successful blacks are first and foremost affirmed and empowered by a positive sense of racial identity. They fully understand that as blacks they will encounter obstacles, prejudices, and inequalities, but they never view their race as the cause of the problem” (Edwards 8). African American students have the capability and the ability to achieve despite the external and structural forces, if educators challenge them to do so and provide appropriate and ample assistance.

The “most successful programs are those that are culturally-based and that attempt to nurture and promote a healthy cultural identity” (Caldwell 32). Culturally-based academic programs help students to establish dual identities between their home and school environments. Thus, policies and programs must

counter the traditional way of thinking “that in order to learn how to behave or talk like members of the dominant group in school and other designated areas, they first have to dispose of their stigmatized ways” (Ogbu 3). Furthermore, Fordham a colleague of Ogbu, suggests that to succeed in the dominant society, African American adolescents may have to divorce themselves from the larger African American adolescent community...[because it] does not validate academic success” (Sanders 84). This view takes the analysis of the achievement gap a step further from socioeconomic explanations to include the important concept of cultural conflicts. However, when considering race from a theoretical perspective one must be careful not to negate the diversity of minority cultures and their views and perspectives of the American education system. There exists great diversity within all ethnicities in many ways, including educational outlooks and educational achievement. Scholars must be careful not to overgeneralize the educational outlooks and achievement of any ethnicity in America as totalizing theories often disregard valuable diversity. “Whereas one response may be mental withdrawal and lack of achievement effort, another response, rarely addressed in the literature on Black student achievement, may be a strong racial identity and a commitment to academic and professional success” (Sanders 92).

Confronting Agency and African American Interpretations:

Everything we shut our eyes to, everything we run away from, everything we deny, denigrate or despise, serves to defeat us in the end. What seems nasty, painful, evil, can become a source of beauty, joy, and strength, if faced with an open mind.

-Henry Miller

Keeping this diversity of plausible responses in mind, larger and dominate group trends must be explored on a societal level. In this light, there are several aspects of the African American cultural interpretation of racism in American society that are counterproductive to academic achievement. A negative dual frame of reference is commonly present in the African American community in that African Americans compare their academic and economic situations to that of white Americans and see their situation as worse. Thus, African Americans do not believe that hard work and education will equate to success for them. This often results in ambivalent attitudes toward school in which African Americans abstractly support education, but

this belief is contradicted by their experiences of racism and limited access to opportunities. In this way, African Americans' identities are at least in part defined by a reaction to the dominant culture and the racism that pervades it. "Because their identities were developed in response to discrimination and racism, these minorities are not anxious to give them up simply because their 'oppressors' require them to do so" (Ogbu 178). This creates a tremendous dilemma for African Americans students, who have to choose between conforming to ways of the dominant culture and displacing their minority identity or academic and economic failure.

The socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of African American families are at the most equally as important as the social and psychological aspects of African Americans' interpretations of the dominant culture are in determining the academic achievement of children. Family organization and values also play a role in the perpetuation of the achievement gap, as Jencks and Philips found that the levels of parental education and income were relatively insignificant compared with what they term parental strategies. Grissmer's research shows that differences in parents' strategies for raising their children account for twenty to twenty-five percent of the achievement gap (See Appendix III).

There also seem to be significant social forces that exist outside the homes of African Americans; for the achievement levels of African American children raised in white homes drops significantly during adolescence (Jencks). This fact indicates additional social and psychological pressures and influences, which are external to the African American home. "Many minority adolescents may not consider the classroom to be a relevant domain for achievement. Incentives outside the classroom may gradually assume a greater value for these youth, with a resulting decline in motivation for academic achievement" (Stevenson 521). In this way, a disconnect between efforts and rewards is present in the dominant view of African American students toward education. Thus, there are obstacles that exist for African Americans' academic achievement on the classroom, home and societal levels.

Scholastic Interventions:

“You don't fight racism with racism, the best way to fight racism is with solidarity.”
-Bobby Seale

In order to fully and adequately address each level's impediment to academic success, education reform will have to be placed in a larger context with social reforms. This process is only logical; after all our society, schools and families ultimately have the same goal as Joe Nathan notes, “they should be working together to help youngsters learn as much as they can, and develop into the best possible people.” Then would it not make sense for legislation to follow this path and place school reform in the larger context with social and societal reforms?

Creating education reforms with a greater social awareness and outlook will undoubtedly be more successful than simple scholastic reforms in this situation. An education reform geared toward one specific social concept can address obstacles at all three structural levels. The development of racial identities and dual identities, which both contrast and embrace the dominant way of thinking lead not only to an acknowledgment of racism and cultural conflicts, but also to an improved sense of agency and internal and external political efficacy. Thus, these programs both help students recognize obstacles to their educations and give them hope for overcoming these obstacles. The development of dual identities will empower African American students in spite of racism and will counter the aspects of African American cultural interpretations that are harmful to academic achievement without forcing assimilation to the dominant culture.

This is exactly what the Advancement Via Individual Determination “untracking” program in a San Diego, California high school set out to do. An encouraging result of this program was the ability of minority students to develop separate yet compatible school and home identities, which allowed them to become academically successful while retaining their ethnic culture. “AVID changes the belief system of an entire school by showing that low-income and minority students can achieve at the highest levels and attend colleges” (AVID). The minority students from this program are now enrolling in college at well above the local and national rates. More notable, however, are the students' development of “reflective system[s] of belief.” This learned viewpoint allows them to place their academic achievements and future possibilities in the context of

discrimination and prejudice they continue to experience. Moreover, they realize the importance of education and hard work, but do not neglect the existence of structural constraints on their economic success. The students did not simply accept these constraints nor were they overcome by them, but they used positive action and adapted functional aspects of the dominant culture to circumvent them. Students in this program have shown that they are capable of affirming their ethnic identity while adopting necessary portions and characteristics of mainstream culture. The “untracking” program uses several strategies that help to create such dual identities including isolating group members at times, publicly recognizing and distinguishing group members and encouraging group cohesion. Furthermore, the inquiry based AVID programs emphasize critical reading and analytical skills in untraditional classrooms where teachers are “facilitators” and “advocates” and where students are responsible for their own learning. “These techniques turn students from passive learners into active classroom contributors and critical thinkers, an approach that's necessary for college admission and success” (AVID). In the end, the authors found that the “appositional identity and patterns of resistance” that Ogbu and Fordham theorized as characteristic of involuntary minorities were absent from this group.

A key feature of the AVID program that attacks the obstacles posed by racism on the structural and classroom level is establishing collaborative relations of power in the classroom. Collaborative relations of power refer to relationships that “operate on the assumption that power is not a fixed, predetermined quantity but rather can be generated in interpersonal and intergroup relations” (Cummings 424). This means that rather than imposing the dominant ways upon minority students, teachers should work with the students to help them retain their own culture while at the same time becoming accommodated to the dominant one. This type of “power relationship is additive rather than subtractive and power is created with others rather than being exercised over others” (Cummings 424). Thus, the teachers are able to empower students with cultural knowledge that will not detract from their sense of belonging to their own ethnicity. Cummings directly spells out the implications of his thoughts for educational policy: “framework implies that in social contexts characterized by historical and current coercive relations of power, educator student microinteractions must explicitly challenge the coercive power structure operating in the broader society as a necessary condition for

students to succeed academically” (Cummings 425).

The AVID program specifically demonstrates that it is not the position of marginality which affects academic achievement, but rather the interpretation of this position (Grant). “Perceptions and reactions to marginality [are] influenced by their varying personal experiences, abilities, and social factors” (Grant 192). The fact that these experiences are dynamic indicates that they can be changed with the appropriate interventions, so that the vast majority of interpretations are conducive to success in the American education system. In order to cultivate interpretations of marginality that are conducive to educational success, “AVID accelerates underachieving students into more rigorous courses, instead of consigning them to dead-end remedial programs...and offers the intensive support students need to succeed in rigorous courses” (AVID).

Fostering a school identity among African American students does not mean that they must give up their cultural identity in order to acculturate to the ways of the dominant culture in school. Cultural identity and acculturation are two independent evolving processes. Cultural identity has do with how a student relates “to their own group as a subgroup of the larger society” (Turner 10). Whereas acculturation, on the other hand, refers to the acquisition of certain “cultural attitudes, values, and behaviors of an alternate society while retaining native cultural customs” (Turner 10). When students are able to develop a dual-identity, like the participants in AVID, they have the ability to obtain the aspects of the dominant culture, which are conducive to academic success, while retaining their cultural identity. In this way, African American students can “accommodate to school culture, but simultaneously maintain strong ties to their Black culture (Turner 13). This process correlates with a high degree of ethnic identity, as well as high academic achievement as ethnic identity and acculturation are closely connected to academic achievement. Students should not and do not have to choose between their culture and academic success. The ability to reflect on one’s own identity through the development of a dual identity opens the door for students to critique their parents’ and peers’ ways of life as well as to criticize and work to change dominant societal trends. This process addresses what Martin Luther King Jr. called the true “function of education...to teach one to think intensively and to think critically... Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.”

Conclusion:

“We must be the change we wish to see in the world.” -Mahatma Gandhi

Are dual identities—home and school—the ideal way for African Americans to thrive academically? No, but neither is the current atmosphere of racism and economic poverty. This, however, is the reality of the situation. African Americans can achieve academically if educators challenge them to do so, if teachers provide them with appropriate and ample assistance and guidance and if African Americans choose to do so. The latter often requires the elimination of some cultural characteristics that are not conducive to educational success. African American students shouldn't have to even contemplate choosing between academic success and their culture, but they do. African American students shouldn't have to endure racism and poverty on their way to gaining an education, but they do. This is the current state of education in America and it is from here that Americans must make changes. Dual identity programs are working and are making positive changes, while addressing and raising awareness about the current state of education in America. These programs may not be ideal in that they require students to divide their identity, but the current situations of many African American students are much less ideal. As Americans we have a moral, social and economic obligation to ensure the future obsolescence of such programs through broad based economic and social changes. For now, we as individuals must affirm the agency of African American students to succeed. Parents and community members must hold their schools accountable for this achievement. Teachers must challenge students to and hold students accountable for achieving. And everyone needs to make the achievement gap less of an issue by making racism an issue again, acknowledging its existence and overcoming it, together.

Annotated Bibliography

AVID Online

2006 AVID Online: Decades of College Dreams. Online: <http://www.avidonline.org/>.

This website provides information on the current state, success and methods of the Advancement Via Individual Determination program, which Hugh Mehan, Lea Hubbard and Irene Villanueva researched in their article *Forming Academic Identities: Accommodation without Assimilation among Involuntary Minorities*.

Anderson, Talmadge

1992 Comparative Experience Factors Among Black, Asian, and Hispanic Americans: Coalitions or Conflicts? *Journal of Black Studies*. 23(1): 27-38.

This article explores the African American, Asian American and Hispanic American cultures and the differences between them, especially concerning racial barriers and their reactions to these barriers. The author suggests that Caucasian Americans often amplify these differences in order to retain their hegemonic status.

Bol, Linda and Robert Berry III

2005 Secondary Mathematics Teachers' Perceptions of the Achievement Gap. *In Project Muse*. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press.

Bol and Berry examine teachers explanations of the achievement gap and find that they often attribute the gap to student characteristics, such as motivation and effort. However, teachers are more likely to make these claims if they work in schools where a majority of students are Caucasian. Furthermore, Bol and Berry note that scholars are more likely to attribute the gap to teaching characteristics.

Caldwell, Leon and Kamau O. Siwatu

2003 Promoting Academic Persistence in African American and Latino High School Students: The Educational Navigation Skills Seminar. *The High School Journal*. 87(1): 30-38.

Caldwell and Siwatu attempt to fill a gap in the scholarly literature on the achievement gap by exploring African American students perceptions of the gap in a qualitative study. They found that African American students emphasize three specific characteristics, namely parental strategies, low expectations and the possibility of attending college.

Cummins, Jim

1997 Minority Status and Schooling in Canada. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. 28(3): 411-430.

Cummings applies Ogbu's immigrant typology to several minority groups in Canada. Similarly to Gibson, Cummings finds this typology and its dualism to be too strict to adequately explain the diversity of situations in Canada. In the end, Cummings advocates for collaborative student-teacher relationships as a way to improve academic achievement.

Educational Research Service

2001 What Can Schools Do to Reduce the Achievement Gap? *In* ERS On the Same Page Series.
Educational Research Service: Online: <http://www.ers.org/otsp/otsp3.htm>.

This paper gives a skeleton history of the achievement gap and the theorized causes. This paper presents both sociocultural and school causes for the achievement gap, such as poor health care and inadequate funding. However, the interventions presented are solely focused on scholastic changes, like teacher quality and raising student expectations.

Edwards, Audrey and Craig Polite.

1992 Children of the Dream: The Psychology Of Black Success New York: Doubleday.

Edwards and Polite research and write about the African Americans of the babyboomer generation and their experiences of integration and racism as well as African Americans reactions to prejudice and discrimination.

Everding, Gerry.

1999 Study yields surprises about American poverty. Record Thursday, University of Washington in St. Louis: 6 May 1999. Online: <http://record.wustl.edu/archive/1999/05-06-99/articles/poverty.html>.

Everding summarizes a study done at Washington University's George Warren Brown School of Social Work on the prevalence of poverty in African American communities.

Gap Min, Pyong

1992 A Comparison of the Korean Minorities in China and Japan.
International Migration Review. 26(1): 4-21.

Gap Min juxtaposes the academic attitudes of Korean students in China and Japan. In China the Korean minority has remained relatively independent and has a strong cultural identity whereas in Japan the Koreans have been expected to assimilate into the dominate culture. Gap Min compares the academic achievement of Korean students in these two contexts and concludes that retaining a strong cultural identity is conducive to academic achievement.

Gibson, Margaret

1997 Ethnicity and School Performance: Complicating the Immigrant/Involuntary Minority Typology. Anthropology & Education Quarterly. 28(3): 431-454.

Gibson provides an international analysis and critique of current ethnographic research concerning minority school performance. In refuting the dualism of ideas like voluntary and involuntary minorities, which are largely a result of Ogbu's work, Gibson argues that the issue of minority academic achievement is much more complex.

Grant, Kathleen and Jeffrey. Breese

1997 Marginality Theory and the African American Student. Sociology of Education. 70(3): 192-205.

This article presents the findings of a qualitative study of university level African American students. The authors conclude that marginality is not the determining factor or explanatory variable in academic achievement, but rather the interpretation of this marginality is what affects African Americans academic achievement.

Grissmer, D., Flanagan, A., & Williamson, S
1998 Why did the black-white score gap narrow in the 1970s and 1980s? *In* C. Jencks and M. Phillips
(Eds.), *The black-white test score gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. Pp. 195-201.

Grissmer, Flanagan and Williamson explore the role of family characteristics in academic achievement. Specifically, they examine the differences between and trends among African American and Caucasian families during the 1970's and 1980's. They conclude that universal changes in family environments during this time had a greater influence on academic achievement among African American students than they did among Caucasian students.

Jencks, Christopher and Meredith Phillips
1998 *The Black-White Test Score Gap*. Washington, D.C: The Brookings Institute.

This book is a collection of scholarly essays centered on the achievement gap. The majority of the essays emphasize the importance of home and cultural environments and not genetic factors as the cause of the achievement gap.

Haycock, Kati.
2001 Closing the Achievement Gap. *Educational Leadership*. 58(6): 6-11.

Haycock summarizes current understandings about and research on the achievement gap. In light of these, she advocates for improving minority academic achievement through the implementation of high standards and a challenging curriculum as well as placing good teachers into all classrooms.

Lee, Stacey
1994 Behind the Model-Minority Stereotype: Voices of High- and Low-Achieving Asian American
Students. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. 25(4): 413-429.

This article presents findings of an ethnographic study concerning Asian American students and their views on and values of education. The study indicates that Asian American students hold a diverse set of perspectives on schooling and that individual students' outlooks often change throughout the course of their education.

Levinson, Meria
2004 The Civic Achievement Gap: Why Poor and Minority Students are Disproportionately
Disengaged in Civic Life—and What Can be Done About It. *Threshold: Exploring the Future
of Education*. Fall 2004: 12-15.

Levinson advocates for civic education as a means to closing the achievement gap. Specifically, she cites civic education programs potential to be active and empowering. Civic education programs may also lead to increased internal and external political efficacy among minority students.

Mehan, Hugh, Lea Hubbard and Irene Villanueva
1994 Forming Academic Identities: Accommodation without Assimilation among Involuntary
Minorities. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. 25(2): 91-117.

This article focuses on the AVID “untracking” program and how this school intervention affects minorities' ideologies and in turn their academic performance. Students in this program have developed dual identities and reflexive systems of belief, which allow them to achieve academically while still retaining their ethnic identity.

Ogbu, John and Herbert Simmons

1998 Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities: A Cultural-Ecological Theory of School Performance with Some Implications for Education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. 29(2): 155-188.

This article focuses on the community factors that effect educational achievement. More specifically, it examines how both these forces and achievement vary between voluntary and involuntary minorities. The article concludes by noting several improvements that can be made in schools to help involuntary minorities succeed. Most notably among these are culturally responsive curriculum, earning the trust of parents and students and finding ways to help these students develop and maintain dual identities (which will allow them to be academically successful without losing touch with their minority culture).

Sanders, Mavis.

1997 Overcoming Obstacles: Academic Achievement as a Response to Racism and Discrimination. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 66(1): 83-93.

This qualitative study explores the reactions of African American students to racism and finds a diversity of responses. A significant number of students in this study respond to racial discrimination with determination to preserve. These students also exhibit an increased value of hard and determination.

Stevenson, HW, Chen , Uttal.

1990 Beliefs and achievement: a study of black, white, and Hispanic children. *In Journal of Child Development*. 61(2): 508-23.

This article summarizes a study on the beliefs of Hispanic, African American and Caucasian elementary school students and their mothers about their educational values. Minority students' parents placed greater emphasis on the importance of education than did Caucasian students' parents. Minority parents also believed more in the value of hard work and effort in the classroom and at home.

Turner, La Shaun

1992 Coping Strategies of Resilient African American Adolescents. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association: 18 August 1992.

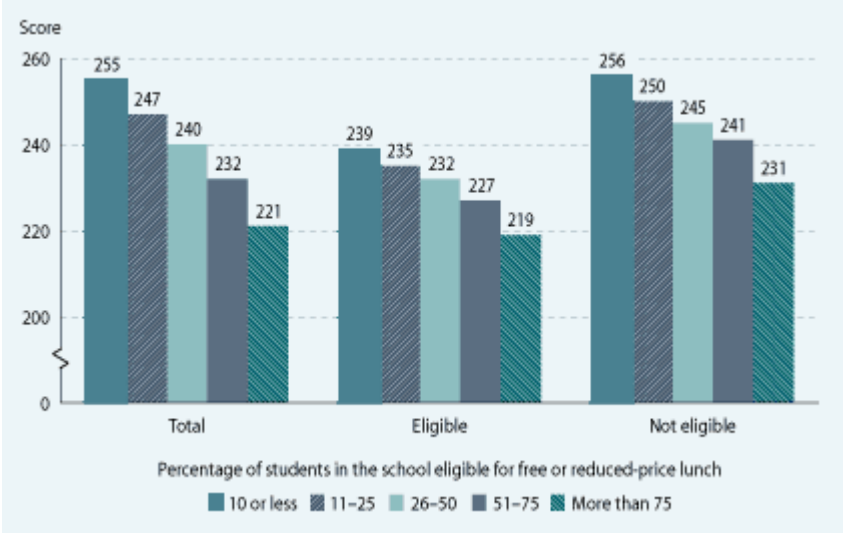
Turner focuses on academically successful African Americans and the values they have and methods they use to achieve. Turner concludes that high achieving African American students either "make a cultural shift" or "incorporate the school culture into their own culture."

US Department of Education

2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress: The Nation's Report Card. Online.
http://nationsreportcard.gov/2005_assessment/s0043.asp?printver.

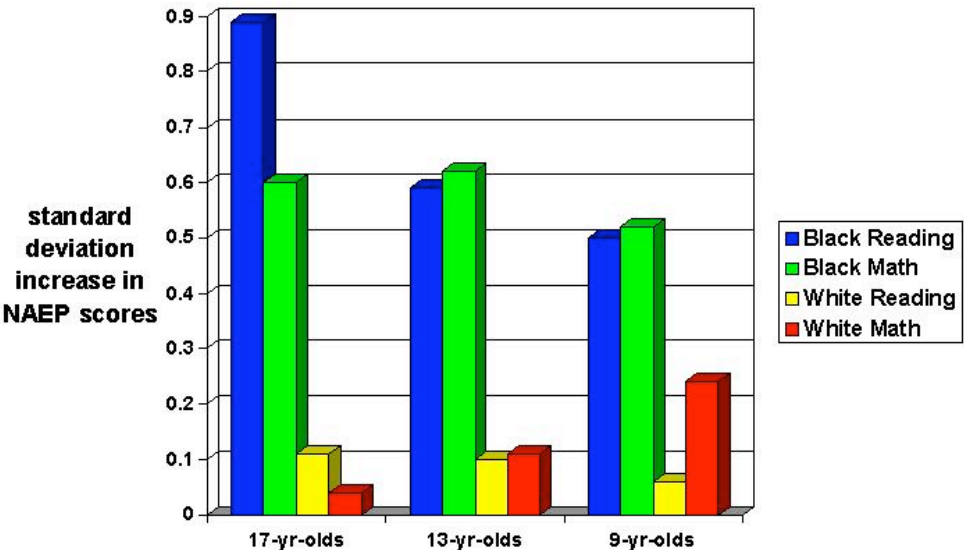
The National Assessment of Educational Progress is only large scale and representative database of educational performance throughout the United States. The site provides both raw data for researchers as well as current trends in United States education.

Appendix I: “POVERTY AND ACHIEVEMENT: Average mathematics score of public school 4th-graders, by whether the student was eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and the percentage of students in the school eligible for free or reduced-price lunch: 2005”



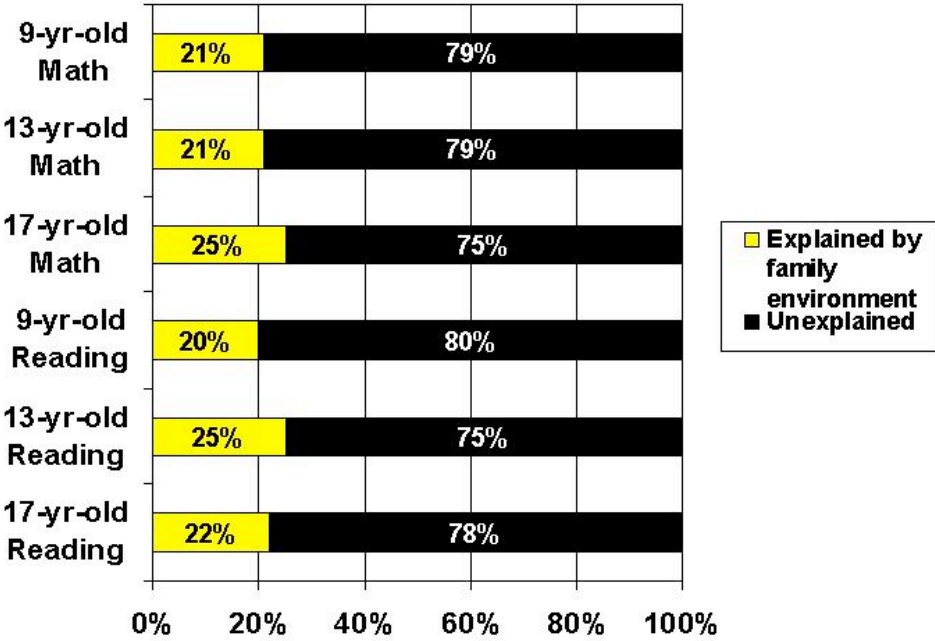
From National Center for Educational Statistics. Online: <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2006/section2/indicator15.asp>

Appendix II: Improvement in Reading and Math Scores for Black and White Students between 1970 and 1990



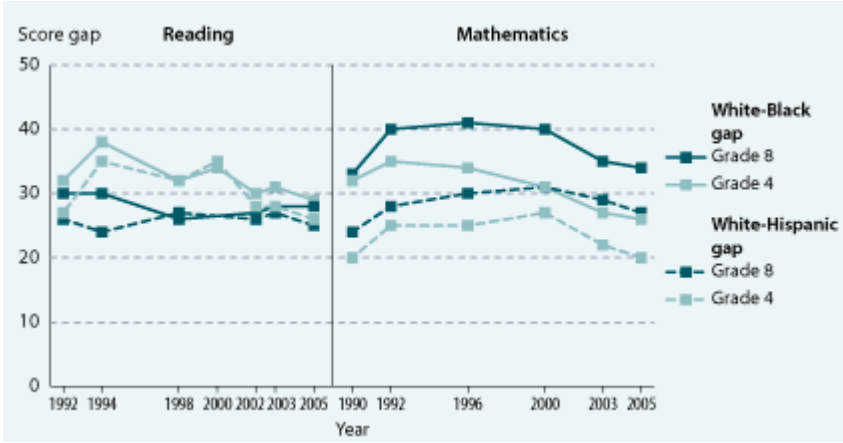
From Grissmer, D. Why did the black-white score gap narrow in the 1970s and 1980s?

Appendix III: Percent of African American Test Scores that is a Result of Parental Strategies



From Grissmer, D. Why did the black-white score gap narrow in the 1970s and 1980s?

Appendix IV: “ACHIEVEMENT GAP: Differences in White-Black and White-Hispanic 4th- and 8th-grade average reading and mathematics scores: Various years, 1990–2005”



From National Center for Educational Statistics. Online: <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2006/charts/chart14.asp?popup=true>