The Canary in the Mine: The Achievement Gap Between Black and White Students

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By Mano Singham

The educational achievement gap is real and has serious social, economic, and political consequences, Mr. Singham points out. But the situation is by no means hopeless, if we start looking at the problem in new ways and avoid simplistic one-shot solutions.

S HAKER Heights is not your typical community. It is a small inner-ring bedroom suburb of Cleveland, covering an area of about five square miles and having a population of 30,000. It is a carefully planned city with tree-lined streets winding past well-maintained homes and manicured lawns, lakes, parks, and red-brick schools nestled in campus-like grounds. The city is about one-third African American and two-thirds white, with a sprinkling of other minorities. Although income levels in the city range from the poor (about 10% below the poverty level) to millionaires, the image of Shaker Heights is that of a primarily middle- and upper-middle-class community (median family income of $66,000) that is home to many of the academics, professionals, and corporate executives of all ethnic groups who work in the Cleveland area. It is also a highly educated community, with more than 60% of all residents over the age of 25 holding at least a bachelor's degree — a figure *three times* the national average.

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FAVORED EXPLANATIONS FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP SEEM TO DEPEND ON WHERE ONE STANDS ON THE IDEOLOGICAL SPECTRUM.

Shaker Heights prides itself on the excellence of its school system, taxing itself voluntarily with one of the highest rates in the state of Ohio in order to maintain the wide range of academic and extracurricular programs that provide the students who take advantage of them with an education that would be the envy of any child in the nation. Hence the city tends to attract as residents relatively well-off people who seek both an integrated community and a high-quality education for their children. Every year, the school district sends off about 85% of its graduating seniors to four-year colleges, many of them prestigious, and boasts a remarkably high number of the National Merit Scholarship semifinalists, way out of proportion to the small size of its student enrollment (about 5,500).

But all is not well, and the problem is immediately apparent when you walk into classrooms. Although the school population has equal numbers of black students and white ones, in the highest-achievement tracks (the Advanced Placement sections) you find only a handful of blacks (about 10%), while the lowest-achievement tracks (called "general education") are populated almost exclusively by blacks (about 95%). When educational statistics are disaggregated by ethnicity, it is found that black Shaker Heights students on average do better than black students elsewhere, just as white Shaker Heights students do better than their counterparts in other school systems. The real puzzle has been why, although both communities have equal access to all the school district's educational opportunities, the academic performance of black Shaker Heights students lags significantly behind that of their white peers. For example, the average black SAT score in 1996 was 956 (compared to a national black average of 856), while the average for white students was 1198 (compared to a national white average of 1049).

This ethnic educational achievement gap is hardly news. It is a well-studied and well-established fact that, using almost any measure (the famous 15-point average I.Q. gap between blacks and whites sensationalized by *The Bell Curve,* SAT scores, college and high school grade-point averages, graduation and dropout rates), black students nationwide do not perform as well as whites.[1] While the phenomenon itself is indisputable, there is no clear consensus on the causes, and favored explanations seem to depend on where one stands on the ideological spectrum.

The so-called liberal interpretation is that this gap is the result of economic disparities between the two ethnic communities that can be traced back to the legacy of slavery and other forms of oppression that blacks have suffered. Support for this view (which I will call the socioeconomic model) comes from the fact that educational achievement correlates more strongly (although not perfectly) with economic status than with any other single variable. Proponents of this model argue that, since the black community lags badly behind the white in both income and wealth, the educational disparities are *caused* by the socioeconomic disparities. Once economic disparities disappear, proponents of this model say, educational (and other social) disparities will vanish along with them.

Those at the so-called conservative end of the ideological spectrum are not convinced that economic factors are the primary cause of black educational underachievement. As evidence, they point to the fact that other minority groups such as Asians, some of whom are economically worse off than blacks, excel in school. They believe that, while the legacy of slavery and segregation was indeed harsh, the civil rights legislation of the Fifties and Sixties has removed all legal roadblocks to black advancement and we have now achieved a color-blind society. This view leads them to conclude that various social pathologies within the black community (lumped under the euphemism "black culture") must be at fault. They point to unstable families; poor parenting skills; lack of drive and ambition; negative peer pressure and poor choice of role models; high levels of teenage pregnancies, drugs, and crime; and lack of parental involvement in their children's education as the causes of a lack of interest in education among black students.

Believers in this type of explanation (which I will call the sociopathological model) tend to lecture black communities constantly about the need for a wholesale spiritual awakening to traditional virtues and the work ethic. While they appreciate the hardships that blacks suffered in the past, their solution is to say, in effect, "Get over it. The real victims and perpetrators of that unjust system are dead. Stop looking to the past and claiming to be a victim. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and take advantage of what is now equally available to everyone." This group concedes that, while racial prejudice still exists, it is essentially a *personal* matter that should be dealt with on a personal level.

A third view (which I will call the genetic model) is best represented by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein, authors of *The Bell Curve*, who, after making the appropriate regretful noises to indicate their lack of racial prejudice, essentially conclude that the educational disparity is a fact of nature, the result of long-term evolutionary selection that has resulted in blacks' simply not having the genetic smarts to compete equally with whites. Instead of engaging in well-meaning, heroic, but ultimately futile efforts to solve an inherently insoluble problem, the authors

argue, the best thing to do would be to accept this situation and then determine how to minimize its adverse social consequences.

THE GOOD news is that there is little evidence for the belief that black students are somehow genetically inferior to whites and that this constitutes an insurmountable barrier to their ever achieving academic equality.[2] The further good news is that there are some very promising studies that indicate that the achievement gap in education can be narrowed dramatically and even eliminated. The bad news is that it is not going to be easy to achieve this goal. The problem needs to be addressed on many fronts — educationally, socially, and psychologically — and there is no single "magic bullet" that is going to take care of it.

The first thing to note is that there is one odd feature that characterizes the discussion of any social problem that is analyzed on the basis of how different ethnic groups compare. Statistics for whites are usually taken as a measure of the "natural" state of society, and black statistics are used as a measure of the problem. If the problem is viewed in this way, then the solution lies in getting black people to "act white," i.e., to adopt the values, behavior, attitudes, and mannerisms of white people, so that blacks will perform as well as whites. Much of the preaching of virtues to the black community about their social pathology (the sociopathological model) seems to have this belief as a basis.

There are many problems with this approach. One is that black people are not as impressed with the virtues of whites as whites are and see no need to emulate them. Given the behavior of whites during the time of slavery, to ask blacks to regard whites as role models for virtuousness seems presumptuous, to put it mildly. James Baldwin captured this difference in perception when he said in *The Fire Next Time*, "White Americans find it as difficult as white people elsewhere do to divest themselves of the notion that they are in possession of some intrinsic value that black people need or want. . . . [T]here is certainly little enough in the white man's public or private life that one should desire to imitate."[3]

It would also be presumptuous to assume that rejecting the white behavior model is an act designed merely to give perverse satisfaction to blacks, even though it might hurt their chances of economic and educational success in life. Researcher Signithia Fordham, in her studies of black high school students in Washington, D.C., found that there was a marked difference in attitudes toward academic and career success between the generation of blacks that came of age during the civil rights struggle and their children.[4]

For black parents, the success of any one black person in any new field was perceived also as a vicarious victory for the whole black community because that individual was opening doors that had hitherto been closed to blacks. Other blacks could then emulate the example of the pioneer and follow in his or her footsteps. Thus eventually the community as a whole could pull itself out of the miserable conditions that were the legacy of slavery. So the black community rejoiced when Thurgood Marshall became a Supreme Court justice, when Ralph Bunche became an undersecretary-general of the United Nations and a winner of the Nobel Prize, when Arthur Ashe became Wimbledon and U.S. Open tennis champion, and when others became lawyers, doctors, nurses, college professors, and other kinds of professionals and administrators. It seemed to be only a matter of time before all members of the black community would obtain their share of the American dream that had long been denied them.

There was a price that was paid by these trailblazers, though. They recognized that all eyes were on them to see if they would measure up. Ever mindful of their responsibility not to jeopardize the chances of those who were to come after them, these black pioneers had to prove themselves "worthy" in white eyes, and this was done by "acting white" (at least in their work environment), by adopting the values and behavior of the white-dominated establishment they were trying to penetrate. In his autobiography, Malcolm X speaks sardonically of what he calls these "firsts," black people who were hailed as the first to occupy any position that had previously been denied to blacks. He said that very often it was these people, even more than whites, who would vociferously condemn other blacks like himself who did not buy into the notion of having to act white in order to advance themselves and their community. But by and large, such "white" behavior was tolerated and excused by blacks as a temporary strategy for the long-term benefit of their community.

But Fordham found that young black people now, following Malcolm X's lead, see things quite differently. What they have observed is that the success of the pioneers did not breed widespread success. A few more blacks made it into the professions but nowhere near the numbers necessary to lift up the whole community. Fordham reports that young black people see the strategy of using individual success to lead to community success as a fatally flawed one. They have replaced it with a largely unarticulated but nevertheless powerfully cohesive strategy that is based on the premise that the only way that the black community as a whole will advance is if all its members stick together and advance together. This way they can keep their ethnic identity intact (i.e., not have to "act white"). Hence the attempt by any individual black to achieve academic success is seen as a betrayal because it would involve eventually conforming to the norms of white behavior and attitudes.

This view causes immense problems for those black students who have higher academic aspirations. Many are torn between wanting to achieve academic success because of their parents' expectations and sacrifices on their behalf and the natural desire to stay in step with their peers and retain important adolescent friendships. Many of them adopt a middle road, keeping their grades just high enough to avoid trouble at home and preserve good relations with their teachers but no more. Fordham calls their strategy "racelessness" — behaving in what they see as a race-neutral manner so as not to draw attention to themselves. They also tend to study alone and in secret so that they cannot be accused of breaking ranks with their peers. This pattern of isolated study leads to disastrous consequences when these same students confront the more challenging college environment.

By itself, Fordham's explanation of why black students underperform may not be sufficiently compelling. But Claude Steele of Stanford University (along with Joshua Aronson) has done research that indicates that other complementary factors contribute to poor academic performance by blacks.[5] Steele's research on college students at Stanford and the University of Michigan indicates that when students are placed in a situation in which a poor performance on a standardized test would support a stereotype of inferior abilities because of the student's ethnicity or gender, then the stu-

dent's performance suffers when compared with those who do not labor under this preconception. For example, when black students and white ones were given tests that they were told measured their academic abilities, black students did worse than whites. But when a control group of black students and white ones were given the same test but were told that the test did not have any such significance but was merely a laboratory tool, the difference in performance disappeared. He calls this phenomenon "stereotype threat."

What is interesting about Steele's research results is that they do not apply only to black/white comparisons. The same phenomenon occurred with men and women. The women's performance deteriorated when they were told that the standardized mathematics test they were taking had shown gender differences, whereas the male/female difference disappeared in the control group when the women were told that the identical test had not shown any gender differences. The white men, who were outperforming black and women students, were themselves not immune to the stereotype threat. When they were told that the same tests were being used to compare their abilities with Asians, their performance deteriorated.

Another interesting fact that Steele uncovered is that the "threat" of stereotyping that depresses performance does not have to be very obvious. Just being required to check off their gender or ethnicity on the answer sheet was sufficient to trigger the weaker performance by the students. Steele concludes that the fear that a poor performance on a test will confirm a stereotype in the mind of an examiner imposes an anxiety on the test-taker that is difficult to overcome. Given the widespread suspicion that blacks cannot cut it in the academic world or that women are not good in math, both these groups enter any test-taking situation with a disadvantage compared with those who do not have this fear. Steele suggests that it is this fear that causes these groups to disinvest in education, to assert that it is not important and that they are not going to expend any effort on mastering it. That way, a poor performance is only a measure of the individual's lack of interest in the subject and is not a sign of his or her inability to master it.

Anthropologist John Ogbu's and other researchers' studies of the effects of minority/dominant relationships on academ-

ic performance are more complex.[6] They looked at studies of the performance of different ethnic minority groups in the same society (such as African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans in the U.S.) and of the same ethnic minority groups in different societies (such as Koreans in Japan and the U.S.). Their results indicate that the performance of any given minority depends on a complex interplay of factors, such as whether the minority is a voluntary one (such as Asians now and earlier generations of Jews, Irish, and Germans) or an involuntary one (such as blacks due to enslavement, Native Americans due to conquest, and Hispanics due to colonization), and the perceptions of the dominant community toward the minority. For example, Koreans and the Buraku (a tribe in Japan that is ethnically identical with other Japanese) do poorly in Japanese schools, where both groups are considered to be academically inferior. But members of the same groups excel when they come to the U.S., which tends to view any Koreans or Japanese (being Asian) as academic high fliers.

Ogbu points out the importance to academic performance of the perception of the relationship between effort and reward. People are more likely to work harder if they can see a benefit in return and have a realistic expectation of receiving that benefit. In the case of education, this link lies in the belief that educational effort leads to academic credentials, which in turn lead to gainful employment.

This effort/reward scenario lies at the basis of the white work ethic and forms an important component of the lectures delivered to blacks by those who adhere to the sociopathological view of underachievement. Ogbu points out that the effort/reward relationship is not at all obvious to blacks. For years blacks were denied employment and education commensurate with their efforts. It did not matter how much they valued education or strove to master it; higher levels of education and employment were routinely denied them purely on the basis of their ethnicity. Hence it is unreasonable to expect them to see the work/credential/employment linkage as applying to them, as most whites do.

But it could be argued that this difference in perception is something that will disappear with time (or, as some might contend, should have disappeared by now if not for blacks' clinging to their "victim" status.) But Ogbu points out that there is

a more pernicious effect still at work. He finds that the value of the "reward" lies very much in the eye of the beholder, because this perception is strongly affected by the group with which one compares oneself. Ogbu argues that members of voluntary minorities (i.e., the immigrant groups against whom blacks are routinely and adversely compared) judge their status and rewards against those of their peers *whom they left behind in their native country.* So even if they are working in lower-status jobs in the U.S. than those they left behind to come here, they tend to be earning more than their peers who stayed at home, and they also feel that their children (for whom they made the sacrifice to come to the U.S.) will have greater educational opportunities and chances for advancement than the children of their peers back home. Hence they have a strong sense of achievement that makes them strive even harder and instill these values in their children.

But blacks (an involuntary minority) have a different group as a basis for comparison. They have no reference points to groups outside the U.S. They compare their achievement with that of white people (usually suburban, middle-class whites), and they invariably suffer in the comparison. Ogbu says that in his interviews with "successful" blacks (however one measures that), it does not take long for the sentiment to be expressed that, of course, if they had been white, they would be even more successful, would have advanced more in their careers, or would have made more money. So for blacks, the perceived link between effort and reward is far weaker than it is for whites and voluntary minorities, and we should not be too surprised if the weakness of this link manifests itself in a lower commitment to academic effort.

The causes of black underachievement identified by Fordham, Steele, and Ogbu cannot simply be swept away by legislative or administrative action, by exhortations, or by identifying people with racial prejudice and weeding them out of public life. They lie in factors that are rooted deeply in history and that will not go away by themselves and may even worsen if not addressed. The good news is that there are specific *educational* strategies that provide hope for change.

One study originated around 1974 at the University of California, Berkeley, and was the result of an observation by a mathematics instructor named Uri Treisman.[7] He noticed (as had countless other college

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instructors) that black and Hispanic students were failing in the introductory mathematics course in far greater numbers than were members of any other ethnic group and were thus more likely to drop out of college. This occurred despite remedial courses, interventions, and other efforts aimed directly at this at-risk group. Treisman inquired among his colleagues as to the possible reasons for this phenomenon and was given the usual list of suspect causes: black students tended to come from homes characterized by more poverty, less stability, and a lack of emphasis on education; they went to poorer high schools and were thus not as well prepared; they lacked motivation; and so forth. Rather than accept this boilerplate diagnosis, Treisman actually investigated to see if it was true. He found that the black students at Berkeley came from families that placed an intense emphasis on education. Their parents took great pride in and were highly supportive of their going to college. Many of these black students had gone to excellent high schools and were as well prepared as any other group. There was also a wide diversity among them — some came from integrated middle-class suburban neighborhoods; others, from inner-city segregated ones. Clearly the conventional wisdom did not hold, and the cause of their poor achievement lay elsewhere.

What Treisman then did was to narrow his investigation to just two groups — blacks and the high-achieving ethnic Chinese minority. He studied all aspects of the two groups' lives to see what factors might be contributing to their hugely different performances, and what he found was interesting. He discovered that, while both blacks and Chinese socialized with other students in their group, the Chinese also *studied* together, routinely analyzing lectures and instructors, sharing tips and explanations and strategies for success. They had an enormously efficient information network for sharing what worked and what didn't. If someone made a mistake, others quickly learned of it and did not repeat it. In contrast, the black students partied together, just like the Chinese, but then went their separate ways for studying, perhaps as a result of the high school experience Fordham describes. This tendency resulted in a much slower pace of learning, as well as the suffering that comes with having to learn from mistakes. Black students typically had no idea where they stood with respect to the rest of the class, and they were usually surprised by the fact that they received poor grades despite doing exactly what they thought was expected of them, such as going to class, handing in all their assignments on time, and studying for as many hours as other students.

Treisman addressed this problem by creating a workshop for his mathematics students. In these workshops, students were formed into groups and worked on mathematics problems together. Discussion and sharing of information were actively encouraged and rewarded. By this means, Treisman sought to introduce to *all* his students (not just those who happened to chance upon this effective strategy) the value of group academic effort and sharing as methods of achieving academic success. One notable feature of this experiment was that the working groups were mixed ethnically and in terms of prior achievement. The second noteworthy feature was that the students were given *very challenging* problems to work on, much harder than the ones that they would normally have encountered in the regular courses.

It is interesting that both these features, although they preceded Claude Steele's research, avoided triggering the stereotype threat identified by him. The ethnically mixed nature of the groups avoided the perception that this was a remedial program aimed at blacks, while the explicitly challenging nature of the problems posed to the students meant that there was no stigma attached to failing to solve them. Failure was simply due to the difficulty of the problems, not to membership in an ethnic group that was assumed to be incapable of achieving academic success. In addition, when students did succeed in solving a problem, they experienced a sense of exhilaration and power at having achieved mastery of something difficult, which, as anyone who has experienced it will testify, is the only real and lasting incentive to high achievement. What Treisman found was that, as a result of his workshops, black students' performance improved by as much as one letter grade.

Much research supports the effectiveness of Treisman's strategy. Traditional "remedial" courses designed for underachieving students are largely based on the assumption that poor performance is due to lack of adequate preparation: that weaker students are handicapped by a lack of so-called basic skills. Hence these courses tend to have a strong emphasis on drilling students on the basics. But what such courses ignore is that students fall behind academically for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that they have not mastered the higher-level reasoning and problem-solving skills that are the prerequisites for success in real life. So even if you drill students in the basics so that they reach the same hypothetical starting line as others, they start falling behind again as soon as they encounter new material because they do not know how to process the new information efficiently. Even worse, the drilling methods often used in remedial courses bore the students (turning them off to education even more) and tend to reinforce the low-level thinking skills that

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caused them to fall behind in the first place at the expense of the higher-level ones, thus compounding the problem instead of solving it. On the other hand, if students are given interesting and challenging problems to work on, things that pique their interest and are relevant to their lives, they are more likely to acquire the so-called basic skills as a means to solving the problems of interest.

In his book *Color-Blind* Ellis Cose describes another success story of black education, this time at Xavier University, a historically black college in New Orleans.[8] This university took to heart the message of psychometrician Arthur Whimbey, who argued in *Intelligence Can Be Taught* that students can be taught to perform better academically by a suitably planned program that stresses the importance of higher-level thinking skills.[9] When the school adopted a Whimbey-inspired curriculum, incoming freshmen so improved their academic performance that Xavier is now the single biggest supplier of black graduates to medical schools, despite its relatively small enrollment. Once again it must be emphasized that what was stressed in this program was the challenging nature of the academic program, the drive for *excellence* as opposed to remediation.

I HAVE argued here that perceiving the academic performance of white students as the norm and that of blacks as a measure of the problem naturally leads to the proposing of solutions that have as their basis the attempt to persuade blacks to "act white" or at least to adopt white values. But the implicit notion that black behavior and values are somehow inferior to whites' makes these solutions offensive and unacceptable to many blacks.

There is an even more serious objection to this strategy of trying to get everyone to adopt the "white ethic" as a means of reducing the educational achievement gap. It is that it might be masking the true nature of the problem by assuming that there is no real problem in the educational delivery system as such but only in the way that it is received by different groups: that is, black students don't respond to education in the proper manner.

An alternative explanation is that the primary problem lies not in the way black children view education but in the way we teach *all* children, black, white, or other. The traditional model of education is one that largely requires children to work alone or to listen to an instructor. It is a passive model, based on the assumption that extrinsic rewards (such as credentials and jobs) are sufficient motivators for students to go to school and learn. Education is regarded as medicine; it is good for you but not necessarily pleasurable or worth doing for its own sake. Much emphasis is placed on teaching students "facts" that are unrelated to their interests or immediate experience but that they are told will be useful to them in the future. There is very little emphasis on exploiting the intrinsic curiosity that children have about the world around them or on using this as a springboard for challenging, self-motivated, and self-directed investigative studies.

Alternative, "active learning" methods of education (which have variants that come under the labels of "inquiry" or "discovery" learning) have as their primary motivator *intrinsic* rewards, the satisfaction that students experience when they, by their own efforts, solve some complex and challenging problem. Anyone who has struggled to understand a complex issue he or she cared deeply about and has succeeded knows the feeling of exhilaration and confidence in one's abilities that ensues. It is truly a high. Unfortunately, this happens far too rarely in education. Instead, most students (irrespective of gender or ethnicity) see the classroom as a place where they are made to learn material and jump through assessment hoops that have no meaning for them, with the carrot being rewarding employment far into the future.

Research indicates that active learning methods produce significant academic gains for students, with more on-task behavior in class. These methods also reduce the achievement gap — but not, as it might be feared, by "dumbing down" the curriculum or depressing the performance of traditional high achievers. These students gain too, but the most dramatic gains tend to be for those who are not well served by the traditional passive model (i.e., involuntary minorities and women). This is because these students are the ones who lagged behind more in the traditional classroom and thus have more room to improve their performance.[10]

Such a deep-rooted criticism of the current education system is hard for many people to accept, especially those who are already highly credentialed academically. After all, they reasonably point out, the system worked for me, and I became a success. In addition, the U.S. has become an economic, scientific, and technological superpower. So how could its education system be so bad?

The issue is not whether any given education system is good or bad, and framing the question in this way is to go down a blind alley. The issue is what fraction of the student population you want to achieve excellence. The fact is that there never was a majority of students "just like us." What is true is that there has always been a relatively small fraction of students (possibly as high as 25%) from families that expect them to pursue a college education. For this fraction, the links between effort, credentials, and rewards are sufficiently realistic and compelling to act as an extrinsic motivator for academic effort. But

even in these families, many students sense that school is not a very interesting or challenging place, and they simply go through the motions, hoping to escape with just enough success to avoid parental censure before they enter the real world and do something meaningful with their lives. Once they do get into real jobs and are confronted with challenging problems, some of them soon develop the higher-level thinking skills required for success.

But in those communities and families in which the perception of the link between effort and reward is weaker (as is the case with low-income families of all ethnicities and with involuntary minorities), these extrinsic rewards become even less compelling as motivators for academic effort and excellence, and the students' performance suffers. In fact, the effort/reward link may actually work *against* education since life on the streets may seem to provide a more realistic expectation of material reward. As long as society requires only a small fraction of educated people and does not care about gender or ethnic or socioeconomic equity issues, then the present system of education is quite adequate. What the academic achievement gap may really be telling us is that, while the symptoms of the education system's ills are more clearly visible in the black community than in the white, there are fundamental problems with the way education is delivered to *all* students.

It used to be that coal miners took canaries into the mines as detectors of noxious gases. If the canary died, then the miners realized that they were in a region of danger and took the necessary precautions. The educational performance of the black community is like the canary, and the coal mine is the education system. The warning signals are apparent. But treating the problem by trying to make blacks "like whites" would be like replacing the canary in the coal mine with a bird that is more resistant to poisonous gases. It simply ignores the real problem.

While we cannot change history, we should not try to dismiss it as irrelevant either. We must come to terms with its very real and serious consequences for our lives *now* if we are to go beyond shallow analyses of important problems such as the achievement gap in education. Such shallow analyses, in the long run, do more harm than good because they force even well-meaning people to choose between two unsavory options: either to adopt a race-neutral socioeconomic explanation that clashes with everyday experience (and is hence secretly rejected though lip service is paid to it) or to look for pathologies in the character or culture of the involuntary minority communities. Neither option reflects the reality.

The educational achievement gap is not an artifact. It is real and has serious social, economic, and political consequences. Its roots lie in complex and historically rooted ethnic relationships and characteristics. But the situation is by no means hopeless. We can be encouraged by very promising experiments that have narrowed this gap. But we have to start looking at the problem in new and deep ways, and we must avoid the temptation to seek simplistic one-shot solutions if we are going to make any real headway.

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