THE EQUITY **PROJECT**
at American Institutes for Research ■

Opening the Doors to Opportunity for All

Setting a Research Agenda for the Future

Select Series Essays From the AIR Research Roundtable on Equity and Opportunity in Education

January 2015

AIR®
AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

Opening the Doors to Opportunity for All: Setting a Research Agenda for the Future

Select Series Essays From the AIR Research Roundtable on Equity and Opportunity in Education

January 2015

James A. Banks
A. Wade Boykin
Peter W. Cookson Jr.
Diana Elliott
David Grusky
Katherine Marshall
Hugh Mehan
Jeannie Oakes
Sheryl Petty
Lois Weis

THE EQUITY PROJECT
at American Institutes for Research ■

AIR
AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®   www.air.org

Contents

Introduction

Introduction to the *Select Series*:
Opening the Doors to Opportunity for All

Peter W. Cookson Jr.

Director, The Equity Project, American Institutes for Research

Not far from the glittering towers of mid-town Manhattan is a public school—call it PS 123. The students who enroll in PS 123 are poor; many of them are very poor. Their school was built more than 75 years ago, students often use textbooks that were printed for past generations, and too many of their teachers come and go quicker than the subway can travel from Brooklyn to the Bronx. Many of the students are hungry, many lack sufficient medical attention, and most have had their dreams of a better life diminished. Nearly all the children at PS 123 are students of color.

There are far too many schools like PS 123 in America today. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education sponsored The Equity and Excellence Commission, which issued a 2013 report[1] containing the following lines:

> Our educational system, legally desegregated more than a half century ago, is ever more segregated by wealth and income, and often again by race. Ten million students in America's poorest communities—and millions more African American, Latino, Asian American, Pacific Islander, American Indian and Alaska Native students who are not poor—are having their lives unjustly and irredeemably blighted by a system that consigns them to the lowest-performing teachers, the most run-down facilities, and academic expectations and opportunities considerably lower than what we expect of other students. These vestiges of segregation, discrimination and inequality are unfinished business for our nation. (p. 14)

The neglect of our most vulnerable students continues. In October 2014, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights sent to school districts across the nations a "dear colleague" letter on resource comparability,[2] noting the problem of unequal access to educational resources across the nation's public schools. This inequality is bone deep and includes disparities in courses, academic programs, extracurricular activities, teaching, leadership, school facilities, and technology and instructional materials.

With these urgent issues in mind, The Equity Project at American Institutes for Research (AIR) sponsored its first Research Roundtable, "Educational Equity: Setting a Research Agenda for the Future," in spring 2014. This invitational Roundtable attracted some of the nation's leading researchers in the field and top AIR researchers, all of whom are listed in Appendix B.

The goals of the Roundtable were to support a conversation and forge a research agenda addressing some of the long-term structural challenges facing American public schools in educating students from low-income and minority families. The Roundtable was a working meeting: After an inspiring introductory talk by NAACP Assistant General Counsel Victor Goode

---

[1] See The Equity and Excellence Commission (2013).
[2] See Lhamon (2014).

and a lively discussion of the contemporary definitions of *equity*, participants rolled up their sleeves and set to work creating new research questions around four major topics:

- Equity and Access to Effective Teachers and Leaders

- Equity and School Readiness

- Equity and Next Generation Schools

- Equity and Outcomes

The result of our work was an exciting and intellectually enriched array of new lines of equity research. Some ideas included the following: creating a new equity dashboard, operationalizing civic engagement, conducting studies of exemplary districts based on intentional models of equity and access to opportunity, conducting studies about how equity concerns can be integrated into teacher education programs, and creating a new bold vision of measuring outcomes.

The essays in this *Select Series* collection reflect some of the voices at the Roundtable. The *Select Series* is primarily intended for researchers, policymakers, and educators. Each volume of the *Select Series* will feature authors who participated in an Equity Project Roundtable. Although there is a general theme for each volume, authors are encouraged to write about what they care most and channel their words from the depths of their own research and thinking.

The title of this volume is *Opening the Doors to Opportunity for All: Setting a Research Agenda for the Future.* It begins with two essays that look at the issue of education and economic mobility as a fundamental human right.

- Jeannie Oakes argues that "public schooling remains our most hopeful site for disrupting inequality and injustice" and lays out an agenda for the future. She makes it clear that research must speak to the "hurly-burly" of social policymaking and implementation as well as inform the technical dimensions of more equitable policy and practice. She concludes, "Operationally, powerful research-based ideas (well-grounded theories and empirical evidence) must be infused into public and policy discourse to illuminate and energize the possibility of change."

- Katherine Marshall tells the story of Father Joe Maier, who works with the very poor families in the Klong Toey district in Bangkok, Thailand. His mantra for all is "Go to school." Looking at the issue of equity and education from an international perspective, Marshall writes, "Visiting classrooms in different parts of the world makes it abundantly clear that classrooms are very far from equal." But her faith in education is unconquerable: "Education in its ideal forms is both nurturing and demanding, unifying and discerning, intellectual and practical."

The volume then moves to a discussion of education and mobility as seen from differing perspectives. Four essays provide a good overview of the complexities of making a difference in overcoming educational inequalities.

- Diana Elliott points to a general slowing of social mobility in the United States. She notes that Americans "raised at the bottom of the wealth ladder also are likely to remain stuck," but she argues that "stickiness is not destiny." Her research tells us that "education,

especially a college degree, is one of the most powerful ways in which the cycle of persistent stickiness at the bottom of the economic ladder can be broken."

- A. Wade Boykin says that "we need to foreground the fundamental purposes for schooling and discern the proper outcomes from teaching and learning activities." He is developing a conceptual framework indicating that it is "in the best interests of society to promote widespread, high-level knowledge, skills, and abilities in intellectual, technical, and civic participation domains for successive cohorts of the diverse American population."

- Lois Weis reminds us that social structure is complex and often is resistant to change. Her recent research indicates that "the intensification of class-based differences in educational achievement and attainment is similarly evident at the postsecondary level." She introduces a cautionary note into the conversation because "the production of educational and economic inequalities can never be fully understood with singular reference to low-income, historically marginalized populations." She then calls for a comprehensive view of how education reproduces inequalities.

- David Grusky makes the case that the socioeconomic safety net is not charity—it provides equal opportunity. He writes, "The safety net is not about treating symptoms, not about providing short-term relief, and certainly not about charity. It is mainly about building a training system and economy that provides opportunities for everyone and that ensures decent rewards for hard work." By reframing how we think about the safety net, Grusky helps us understand more deeply how the doors to opportunity can be opened so that all Americans have a realistic chance of developing their talents and achieving success.

The next three essays offer some directions in how education can open the doors to opportunity for all students.

- James Banks writes, "Important goals of the worldwide ethnic revitalization and multicultural movements since the 1960s and the 1970s are to reform schools so that they reflect the cultures of diverse groups of students and to rewrite school history so that it reveals the experiences, struggles, hopes, and dreams of diverse groups and the contributions they have made to nation building." This vision of educational vibrancy and equity sends a message of hope.

- Sheryl Petty shares this vision and elaborates on equity-centered capacity building (ECCB). She makes the case that ECCB provides "a lens, a set of skills, and specific strategies that support school systems and communities as they move along the continuum of transformative and sustainable improvement." Her essay not only provides thoughts for *why* educational equity matters but also offers one path to achieving it. Petty writes, "Education in the United States is intended to serve the ends of participatory democracy and help every person reach his or her full potential, including robust participation in civic life and meaningful work."

- Hugh "Bud" Mehan offers some examples of successful detracking models from California. Because tracking is so closely associated with the reproduction of inequalities, it strikes at the heart of the struggle for equal education. Mehan writes, "Detracking is not merely a technical or structural change in the organization of schooling. It actually involves a cultural change in educators' beliefs, attitudes, and values as well as changes

in the curriculum and the organization of instruction. In a word, it requires the formation and maintenance of a college-going school culture."

Taken as a whole, these essays inspire, inform, and form a call to action. In 1967, Lyndon B. Johnson appointed an 11-member commission to investigate the causes of the race riots in the United States. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (also known as the Kerner Commission after its chair, Illinois Governor Otto Kerner Jr.) and its 1968 report stirred a national controversy. The report's most famous passage was a dire warning: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal."[3]

Now flash forward 46 years to today. Much progress has been made in those years, but little has changed for those living in urban neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. They still are separate and unequal. And so are the schools their children attend. It is time to finish the unfinished work of the nation.

References

The Equity and Excellence Commission. (2013). *For each and every child: A strategy for education equity and excellence* (Report to the Secretary). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/eec/equity-excellence-commission-report.pdf

Lhamon, C. E. (2014, October 1). [Dear colleague letter: Resource comparability]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-resourcecomp-201410.pdf

National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. (1968). *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. Retrieved from http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/docs/kerner.pdf

---

[3] See National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968), p. 1.
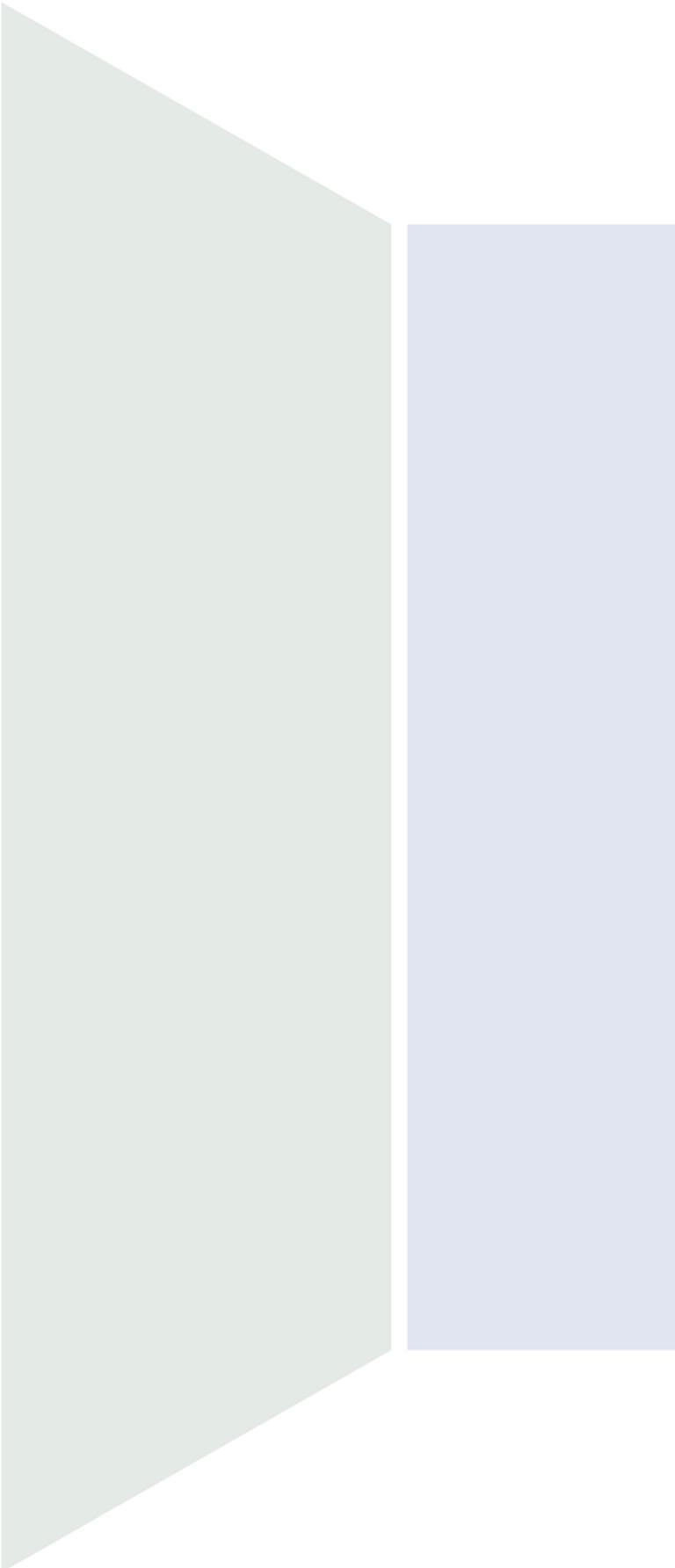
Section 1

Education and Economic Mobility as a Fundamental Human Right

Research in the Ongoing Struggle for Educational Equity: An Agenda for the Future

Jeannie Oakes

Presidential Professor in Education Equity, Emeritus, University of California–Los Angeles

Larger percentages of American young people than ever before are completing high school and going on to postsecondary education (Child Trends, 2013). These gains are particularly impressive, given dramatic demographic shifts in the composition of the nation's young people, with this year's public school population majority non-White and 20 percent living in poverty (Kena et al., 2014). These gains have been achieved even though significant social and political inequalities persist; economic gaps have widened dramatically; and the unequal structures, cultures, and practices of education continue to reinforce and help reproduce these broader trends.

Even so, public schooling remains the nation's most hopeful approach for disrupting inequality and injustice. Americans expect education to be democratic and inclusive, and they hold fast to the value that education is society's great equalizer. They charge schools and universities with preparing future citizens and community members who will contribute to the common, public good as well as pursue private interests. They support knowledge building to advance the collective social and political welfare—including better and more equitable education—as well as promote individual innovation and economic productivity. These collective, public goals of education create opportunities for bending the education system and society toward equity and justice.[1]

The Problem

Research could and should play a pivotal role in the ongoing struggle for educational equity. Currently, however, inequality is quite immune to the influence of robust theory and evidence that could inform inequality-reducing policies and practices. In addition, research pointing to more equitable approaches is swamped by educational structures, culture, and individual actions that "effectively maintain inequality," even when that research provides workable technical solutions (Lucas, 2001, p. 1671).

Inequality also is a moving target. It manifests differently in response to equity reform efforts in schools and to changes in the larger ecology of inequality. So, evidence about how to remedy any specific inequitable policy or practice, even if that remedy is adopted or implemented, will not put inequality to rest because other inequitable policy and practices nearly always emerge. What remains constant is that the education of marginalized and disadvantaged young people lags persistently behind, as do their life chances. In this context, therefore, conventional education research in itself cannot be a powerful tool for remedying inequality.

What Might Be Done? (The Argument)

The good news is that—as is the case in the larger economic, social, and political spheres— educational inequality is a result of social policies and the manner which those policies are

---

[1] This idea was argued ably in Carnoy and Levin (1985).

implemented. As a result, inequality can be remedied by changing policy and implementation. This may seem obvious, but it flies in the face of cultural norms that see inequality as inevitable, intractable, or even "natural." Conventional research that is conventionally disseminated and that illuminates ways to remedy inequality has not proven sufficient to prompt policymakers and practitioners to adopt and/or implement measures that would eliminate inequality. This situation occurs, in part, because inequality results as much (or more) from pervasive and powerful political and cultural forces as it does from technical failures in policy and practice. That does not mean that research is irrelevant to the struggle for equity. What it does mean, however, is that research must do more than inform the technical dimensions of more equitable policy and practice. Research also must address and engage the "hurly-burly" of politics, social policymaking, and implementation.[2] This implies seeking answers to different research questions. It also means that research must play very different roles in social policymaking beyond the conventional one of providing disinterested expert analysis and trustworthy facts.

Why Might This Approach Make a Difference? (Evidence for the Argument)

Four key points, buttressed here by evidence and examples, support this alternative approach.

Point 1: Educational inequality is inextricably connected to social, economic, and political inequality.

Alongside fostering individual learning and development, education is a cultural process that prepares, certifies, and socializes members of succeeding generations to become workers, citizens, and community members. As a result, education can either expand or constrict the life chances of those from disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Education also shapes culture. Schools and universities are powerful societal institutions that help create, legitimize, reproduce, and transmit the knowledge and values underlying shared views of what is true and good. Accordingly, education can perpetuate or disrupt norms of inequality and injustice, frame social "rules" that bound democratic participation, and shape possibilities for individual and community well-being.

Education is central to individual life opportunity, and the impact is intergenerational. Well-educated adults tend to raise well-educated children with abundant life chances, while the children of less well educated parents grow up with less education as well as diminished life expectancy, productivity, earnings, and civic participation.[3] Today, education and life chances are more tightly connected than ever before. Individuals without high-quality schooling face dim prospects for decent work and dignified lives. These gaps engender much handwringing, but they also allow advantaged families to maintain a comparative life advantage for their own children.

---

[2] Here, John Dewey's (1931/1985, p. 188) admonition is instructive: "There is no education when ideas and knowledge are not translated into emotion, interest, and volition. There must be constant accompanying organization and direction of organized action into practical work. 'Ideas' must be linked to the practical situation, however hurly-burly that is."

[3] See Duncan and Murnane (2011).

Point 2: Inequality results, in large part, from social policy and, therefore, can be remedied.

The growing economic inequality in the United States—along with its many negative social consequences—has its origins in the American political system and the nation's policy choices. During the last 30 years, corporate and conservative interests have become organized and effective at using a compelling narrative, developed and aggressively promoted by conservative intellectuals, to persuade policymakers to respond to the needs of large corporations at the expense of workers and the poor. [4] The deregulation of the financial industry, the weakening of organized labor, and pro-business tax advantages have been among the most consequential outcomes. However, this narrative—with its emphasis on privatization, individual initiative and responsibility, smaller government, and reduced socioeconomic safety nets—also has blunted and, in some cases, reversed government efforts to advance equity in the social and political realms as well as in the economy. The 1996 federal welfare reform law known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act is a prime example—but only one—of these politics at work.[5]

Education also has become a part of this private-market approach. In recent decades, highly coordinated, well-funded school "reform" efforts have successfully advanced private-market strategies (e.g., standards, performance [test]-based accountability, incentives, privatization, and parental choice systems) as key drivers for educational improvement. Using market metaphors to guide the provision of education, these efforts have normalized the idea that individuals seek to "consume" the best opportunities in a competitive and unequal schooling marketplace, with "bottom-line metrics" (test scores) as proxies for quality. Rather than ensuring equitable schooling, these reforms create winners and losers (among communities, schools, teachers, and students) that reflect economic and social advantage. They also exacerbate gaps in access to opportunity and quality that already are burdening communities of color and communities of concentrated poverty.[6]

During other periods of American history, the nation's politics were shaped by other metaphors (e.g., the War on Poverty), which drove policies that built educational capacity in disadvantaged communities (e.g., Head Start, Early Head Start, Title I Compensatory Funding) and, during a short period of adequate funding (in the 1970s), yielded more equitable schooling opportunities and outcomes—including narrowed achievement gaps. Other nations—Finland and Korea, for example—have framed narratives and adopted policies that have built systems where a rhetorical commitment to equity has been matched with expanded opportunity and increased capacity to actually provide equitable, high-quality education.[7] Clearly, politics and policy can either increase or reduce educational inequality.

---

[4]For a well-documented argument on this point in the economic sphere, see Stiglitz (2012); for a tracing of this effort, also see Rich (2004).
[5] See Piven (2002) and Chappell (2009).
[6] See Carter and Welner (2013) and Darling-Hammond (2010).
[7] See Darling-Hammond (2010).

Point 3: Research illuminating how policies and practices can reduce inequality is not enough to persuade policymakers and practitioners to adopt and/or implement such policies.

During the past 40 years, education researchers have produced a huge amount of theory and evidence to explain the causes and consequences of educational inequality as well as provide clear directions for remedying it. These researchers have identified, engineered, and tested specific policies and practices that have proven to be effective in increasing school success, promoting healthy child development, and improving the life chances of young people who are most negatively affected by the harms of poverty, racial isolation, and disparate educational opportunities. For example, studies have demonstrated the efficacy of racially and socioeconomically integrated schools, adequate funding, access to high-quality teachers, challenging curriculum, student-centered instruction, increased learning time, bilingual instruction, and health and social supports to reduce current inequalities.[8] Other studies have documented how whole systems can adopt and implement policies that yield far more equitable opportunities and results.[9]

Nevertheless, few of these more equitable policies and practices have been adopted systemically. In cases where they have been adopted, they often are undermined by flawed, superficial, and/or short-lived implementation.

Why has this been the case? One reason is that too much important research on inequality fails to reach beyond the academy. As a result, too few advocates are able to access research in a language that they can understand and use. A second reason is that educational inequality is not just an "engineering" problem that requires a technical fix produced and tested by experts. Although technical solutions—evidence-based policies and practices—are surely needed, they are not enough. Because inequality is a deep reflection of cultural norms and power relations, it is sustained by prevailing beliefs and politics. Dominant beliefs cast disparities as "expected." Likewise, it seems "normal" for young people from materially and culturally advantaged groups to succeed at higher rates than others who do not have these advantages. Rather than being at odds with cultural values, inequality is endemic to the logic of American society and to the role that schools play in it.

On the political side, dominant ideologies limit the range of acceptable government action, including neo-liberal ideas of improvement through competition and measurement and the view that more spending will not bring about improvements in education. But politics also manifests in the actions of individuals as they respond to equity reforms. Sociologist Samuel Lucas (2001) has demonstrated how advantaged members of society work actively to ensure "effectively maintained inequality" (p. 1642). Elites are more concerned, he explains, that their own children's opportunities are qualitatively *superior* to other children's than about the quality of the opportunities themselves. As a result, they actively work to keep *differentiation* in the system that effectively maintains their children's comparative advantage—even turning so-called equity reforms to their advantage—despite evidence of their widespread benefits for others.

---

[8] For a discussion of such evidence, see Carter and Welner (2013); Darling-Hammond (2010); Duncan and Murnane (2013); Linn and (2007); and Oakes, Lipton, Anderson, and Stillman (2013).
[9] See, for example, Kirp (2013).

Politics and cultural norms also shape the implementation of social policy in ways that undermine equitable results. The historic ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* provides a sobering example. Perhaps the most important lesson of this case was the underappreciation of the need to change hearts, minds, and political power as well as policy. Desegregation confronted deeply rooted cultural and political barriers that legal decisions and technical solutions alone could not overcome. Once the remedy was framed narrowly as "busing," it became impossible to implement. Implementation not only was heavily resisted by the local community, it also was undermined by plans that placed disproportionate burdens of distance on African-American students and/or that engaged only the poorest White students and neighborhoods. Threats of "white flight" and lowered property values not only tapped into deeply felt racial prejudices but also were used in many communities by unscrupulous realtors seeking quick profits. Even the most elegantly designed student assignment plans were not robust enough to change the cultural norms and individual actions that perpetuated segregation and inequality.

Research evidence, by itself, is simply not compelling enough to persuade policymakers or practitioners to abandon inequitable policies and practices that are so rooted in cultural and political norms. Lessening inequality requires new thinking and new politics, as well as technical remedies—i.e., new policies and practices.[10]

Point 4: Research must speak to the "hurly-burly" of social policymaking and implementation, as well as inform the technical dimensions of more equitable policy and practice.

The hard realities of adopting and implementing equitable policy do not make research irrelevant. Such realities suggest, however, that theory and evidence likely will press policymakers and the public toward equity only if the theory and practice become part of a reform ecosystem that includes professional practice, strong public engagement, and activism on the part of those most negatively affected by the current inequalities.[11] Therefore, research must become a tool in a struggle to make the cultural and political landscape hospitable to the adoption, implementation, and sustainability of evidence-based structures and practices that push the education system toward equity. To accomplish this goal, research must go beyond the technical dimensions of reform to incorporate an understanding of education's pivotal position in the struggle for social justice and a grasp of the contextual realities in which that struggle is waged—dominance of market thinking, skewed attention to and opportunity for students from high-income families in the context of increasingly unequal childhoods, continued structural racism and class struggle, and inadequate resources for poor schools.

Operationally, powerful research-based ideas (well-grounded theories and empirical evidence) must be infused into public and policy discourse to illuminate and energize the possibility of change. Such infusion requires dissemination strategies far beyond publishing in academic journals. But even that strategy won't be enough. Equitable change also requires educators to develop powerful "proof points" of scalable alternative policies and practices that address problems of inequality and injustice and that can be accomplished in "regular" schools. Powerful

---

[10] See Welner (2001).
[11] See Orr and Rogers (2010).

policy engineering is required to ensure that systems change in ways that ensure that these extraordinary things can become "normal." Research can inform both the proof points and the policy engineering—but only if provided in forms that are both accessible and useful. Also essential is the active engagement of powerful people—both advocates and organized members of the communities most disadvantaged by current inequalities. Together, these elements comprise a technical, cultural, and political ecosystem that can drive change.

This reform ecosystem implies that researchers must seek answers to different research questions. It also speaks to the need for researchers to play very different roles beyond the more conventional one of disinterested expert data collector, analyst, and reporter of facts. Equity-minded scholars must be public intellectuals and as well as scrupulous researchers—taking on roles that go far beyond those of scholars working on more technical educational problems. A major challenge, of course, is persuading universities, colleagues, and funders to recognize, reward, and nurture this essential scholarly work.

Recommendations for a Research Agenda for Educational Equity

From 2009 to 2012, a Ford Foundation project titled "Building Knowledge for Social Justice" engaged dozens of scholars and activists in studying the creation and use of knowledge that could help confront and help remedy inequality—not only under the law but also in political, economic, and cultural life, including education.[12] The goal was to understand how research and researchers could engage constructively in an equity reform ecosystem. The project focused on the need to do the following: (a) lay the basic intellectual and institutional foundations for social change by reshaping the way that society makes sense of systematic patterns of marginalization, inequality, and repression; (b) generate new policy ideas and advocacy tools for disrupting those patterns; (c) increase support for and the legitimacy of scholars' engagement in developing intellectual tools for social activism around marginalization, discrimination, and inequity; (d) specify the directions that academic institutions can take to achieve greater inclusiveness and relevance to a diverse democracy—in dedicated centers, in mainstream academic departments, and in professional schools; and (e) identify strategies for connecting scholars to new and traditional media tools and to activist groups eager for knowledge tools to advance their social justice goals.

Four recommendations emerged from the project. The first recommendation was to develop and communicate knowledge (concepts, evidence, and narratives) and combine that knowledge with strategic communication and activist leadership in order to shift cultural norms and values so Americans recognize the following:

- Inequality in the United States is detrimental to the quality of life for everyone—not just the poor.

- Inequality, in large part, is the consequence of social and economic policies—not just a function of individual values and behavior.

- Americans can and should develop social and economic policies that reduce inequality and advance social justice.

---

[12] The "Building Knowledge for Social Justice" project was directed jointly by Jeannie Oakes and Amy Stuart Wells, professor at Teachers College, Columbia University.

The second recommendation was to engage public universities as generators of solutions to chronic and rising social and economic problems by producing applied, policy-relevant, and evidence-based knowledge anchored in stronger links to local communities and local instantiations of those problems.

The third recommendation was to engage universities located in major media markets in bringing together academics, media practitioners, community leaders, and activist leaders in a coordinated effort to generate multiple approaches (including new media) for using research to inform and engage the public in responding to inequalities and injustices across several social policy domains, including income and wealth, criminal justice, housing, and education.

The fourth recommendation was to establish institutes in high-status universities to support research, leadership development, and media/communication. The mission of these institutes would be to shift current public discourse and policy debates to reduce inequality and advance social justice. Collectively, these institutes would:

- Advance, synthesize, and build on current knowledge that illuminates the nature and impact of inequality and produces compelling ideas, evidence, and arguments.

- Develop public intellectuals and civil society leadership with the capacity to use knowledge, narratives, and strategic communication to influence the policy agenda in specific issue areas by providing residency fellowships and awards to cohorts of scholars, journalists, activists, and civil society leaders.

- Frame and test narratives that make such knowledge salient to and resonant with Americans, and employ strategic communication to infuse the knowledge and narratives into public discourse; then develop and implement new critical communication strategies to disseminate these progressive narratives—using new technologies, social media, and traditional communications tools.

- Use new technologies to connect across campuses as networks of researchers, leaders, and communication specialists to foster and spread dialogue that generates strategic modes of change and possibility.

A research agenda for educational equity could do no better than to follow these four recommendations. They are ambitious, indeed, but their ambition is required to match the scale and depth of the education inequality problems currently crippling America's increasingly diverse democracy.

References

Carnoy, M., & Levin, H. M. (1985). *Schooling and work in the democratic state*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Carter, P. L., & Welner, K. G. (2013). *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Chappell, M. (2009). *The war on welfare: Family, poverty, and politics in modern America.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Child Trends. (2013). *Educational attainment* [Website]. Retrieved from http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=educational-attainment

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Dewey, J. (1985). Is there hope for politics? In Boydston, J. A. (Ed.), *John Dewey: The later works,1925–1953. Vol. 6: 1931–1932: Essays, reviews, and miscellany* (pp. 182–189). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University. (Original work published 1931)

Duncan, G. J., & Murnane, R. (2011). *Whither opportunity: Rising inequality, schools, and children's life chances.* New York, NY: The Russell Sage Foundation.

Duncan, G. J., & Murnane, R. J. (2013). *Restoring opportunity: The crisis of inequality and the challenge for American education.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Kena, G., Aud, S., Johnson, F., Wang, X., Zhang, J., Rathbun, A., et al. (2014). *The condition of education, 2014* (NCES 2014-083). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014083.pdf

Kirp, D. L. (2013). *Improbable scholars: The rebirth of a great American school system and a strategy for America's schools.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Linn, R. L., & Welner, K. G. (Eds.). (2007). *Race-conscious policies for assigning students to schools: Social science research and the Supreme Court cases.* Washington, DC: National Academy of Education.

Lucas, S. R. (2001). Effectively maintained inequality: Education transitions, track mobility, and social background effects. *American Journal of Sociology, 106*(6), 1642–1690. Retrieved from https://campus.fsu.edu/bbcswebdav/institution/academic/social_sciences/sociology/Reading%20Lists/Stratification%20%28Gender%2C%20Race%2C%20and%20Class%29%20Copies%20of%20Articles%20from%202009/Lucas-AJS-2001.pdf

Oakes, J., Lipton, M., Anderson, L., & Stillman, J. (2013). *Teaching to change the world* (4th ed.). Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Orr, M., & Rogers, J. (2010). *Public engagement for public education: Joining forces to revitalize democracy and equalize schools.* Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Piven, F. F. (2002). *Work, welfare and politics: Confronting poverty in the wake of welfare reform.* Eugene, OR: University of Oregon Press.

Rich, A. (2004). *Think tanks, public policy, and the politics of expertise.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Stiglitz, J. E. (2012). *The price of inequality*. New York, NY: Norton.

Welner, K. G. (2001). *Legal rights, local wrongs: When community control collides with educational equity.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Education for All: Translating Ideals of Equity Into Robust Realities

Katherine Marshall

Senior Fellow at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs

"Go to School!"

A railway track runs right through the overcrowded slum district of Klong Toey in Bangkok, Thailand. Picking through the trash and mucky puddles along its path poses some severe challenges to idealism. It is tempting simply to rage at the rank injustice of the contrast between this slum and the gaudy wealth on display only blocks away in central Bangkok. In Klong Toey, the signposts of poverty can't be missed: ragged clothes on children, the teetering walls of a shack, litter everywhere, and pervasive foul smells. There are visible signs of the violence that is a daily experience for those who live in this large community.

But Catholic priest Father Joe Maier, an American who has spent the past 45 years here, walks confidently along, greeting everyone he meets. He stops, listens to their problems, and comes back with practical solutions. And his most common advice for children and adults alike? "Go to school!" He has built a center in Klong Toey that began as single kindergarten offering children three years of safety, caring, and learning and expanded to more than 30 such schools across Bangkok. As each group graduates, his advice is the same: Go to school. If your Daddy beats you, go to school. If your Mama plays cards, go to school. If your grandma is sick, go to school. "Go to school!" is Father Joe's mantra, and it is what gives him hope even on the darkest days.

Education is indeed the best hope for achieving an ideal of an equitable world—where all people, everywhere, have a chance to develop their potential, their capabilities, and have a fair chance of living a decent life as part of a decent, caring community. Education in its ideal forms is both nurturing and demanding, unifying and discerning, intellectual and practical. It can open the same doors to everyone yet adapt to differing circumstances and needs that make for the diverse tapestry of a plural world.

The world community has made stunning progress toward a goal articulated 24 years ago at the Word Conference on Education for All, in Jomtien, Thailand: "to make primary education accessible to all children and to massively reduce illiteracy before the end of the decade" (UNESCO, 2014). Father Joe's conviction that the best hope for a child in Klong Toey to lead a better life is to get an education also is the heart of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals adopted in the year 2000 (United Nations, n.d.). It is what wise leaders in many parts of the world work for. School enrollments of children almost everywhere have increased dramatically. Policies and attitudes that have kept girls out of schools have been challenged, and the gaps between the number of boys and girls in school are narrowing. Stories of human achievements that are the product of education offer inspiration. Father Joe is especially proud of a girl who went from his slum kindergarten to a Ph.D. in neuroscience. In its *Millennium Development Goals Report*, the United Nations (2014) indicates that in poorer countries, enrollment in primary education reached 90 percent in 2012, up from 83 percent in 2000; still,

in 2012, 58 million children of primary-school age were out of school (half in conflict-affected countries). The global goal is to fill that gap by 2015.

But if the ideal of equity is to be taken seriously, education leaders need to respond more deeply than simply advocating "go to school." Visiting classrooms in different parts of the world makes it abundantly clear that these classrooms are very far from equal. In many classrooms, high student numbers make teaching a major challenge (I visited a single primary-school class in Niger with 115 students) and many schools lack even the most rudimentary materials. Teacher absenteeism also is a common problem, and many teachers are ill prepared for their work. Not all children even in a single class have a similar chance to succeed because some are roundly favored. School quality looms as a major issue in many places. Corruption is rife in some education systems. School security is far too often tenuous. Despite a clear understanding that early childhood education is critical, most young children have no opportunity to benefit from quality programs. As the challenge of meeting quantity goals comes closer to realization and quality challenges are recognized, fundamental questions about the purposes of education come increasingly into focus. Education prepares people for adult roles and thus for jobs, but civic values are equally part of the challenge. In many places, schools undermine more than reinforce the ideal values they are supposed to instill.

In short, the weight of hope placed on education is great but there is still far to go.

The Ideals of Equity

The concept of equity is important in shaping broad goals for human development, and it has great and special importance for education. The significance of equity can be teased out through an exploration of similarities and differences between equality and equity versus inequality and inequity.

The similarities are exemplified by the shared link of both *equity* and *equality* to fairness and balance (the Latin root *aequus* means "even" or "fair"). Both terms suggest at least a sense of equal opportunity. Many of the growing concerns in global debates about inequality of incomes and outcomes come back to this notion of fairness.

For education, the significance of equality is most readily applicable for quantifiable measures (such as financial and human resources) as well as for measures of achievement (such as mathematics test results). Looked at through such lenses, education is patently unequal in many senses. Economist-philosopher Amartya Sen and philosopher Martha Nussbaum have contributed to an understanding of the development of human capabilities as a fundamental goal that promises to take societies much further along in a direction of equality.

The concept of equality, however, contains a suggestion of sameness as a goal or ideal. Indeed, some school systems pride themselves on measures that verge on ensuring a very similar approach that offers every student an equal measure of inputs and an equal chance of success. Although equality is a moral concept, it smacks more of economics and mathematics than philosophy or theology.

The term *equity* suggests a broader concept than *equality*, within the similar framework of a basic concept of justice and fairness. *Equity* goes far beyond readily quantifiable measures. It involves a complex web of relationships involving justice, rights (both human and property), freedom of choice, security, political power, wealth, and poverty.[1] It is a complex concept because it revolves around the notion of fairness and balance but begs for answers to the question "in relation to what?" The recognition that there is no simple answer—that judgment must form part of the assessment—is an important aspect of looking at equity.

In international development circles, the term *equity* is used alongside *equality*. *Equity* often is used to make it clear that sameness, some form of rigid formula, is not the objective. The *World Development Report 2006:Equity and Development* (The World Bank, 2005) emphasizes the crucial importance of investing in people as the core of achieving equity. It emphasizes the effects of unequal opportunities when markets are imperfect, and the consequences of inequity for the quality of institutions that a society develops. In short, bundled up in this complex term, with a complex etymological history, is the basic idea that there are different values, different approaches, and thus different paths for life outcomes to meet a common standard that can be widely seen as just and fair.

Stretching Education for All Goals With a Call to Notions of Equity

Looking specifically at education, internationally, what might some of the implications be for setting equity goals? Using the term *equity* suggests an ideal for education systems that focuses on their capacity to offer every student a real (and presumably equal) chance to succeed, in the sense of being prepared for the competitive challenges of life. It also suggests that the systems of education need not look the same—that they can be adapted to the circumstances, culture, and needs of each situation. The system will address the differing needs of different students so that all students can overcome the obstacles they face, as a group or individually. These are tall orders, and there obviously is a raft of issues along the way—among them, inevitable tensions between promoting excellence and allowing the most capable to fulfill their potential yet ensuring the optimum outcome for a group overall. That not all systems and outcomes will be the same is a truism. But it also is increasingly clear that as differences among systems and outcomes become sharper and more transparent with improved communication, comparisons will accentuate the gaps in achievement. There are real tensions between converging standards based on "best practice" that may be more and more measurable and visible, and more individualized systems adapted both to cultural differences and individual student needs.

Different educational inputs and outcomes are most readily compared for many skills related to employability. Such measures are far more difficult to define and discern where civic values are concerned, however. The contributions of education to social cohesion—or, in contrast, to weaknesses in enabling students to engage in meaningful ways in their society and in increasingly plural communities—lend themselves far less readily to quantifiable comparators. This area deserves far more attention.

---

[1] These arguments are laid out in more detail in Marshall (2010).

There is another dimension to add to the challenge: lifelong learning that is a part of longer life spans and a fast changing world. Continuing adult education will grow as a part of educational systems and goals.

Questions and Research Agendas That Are Worth Addressing

The remarkable expansion of education in virtually every corner of the world should be seen as a remarkable human achievement—one that opens whole new vistas of equitable societies. That this current educational situation is a first in human history is too often ignored. What has been achieved offers a remarkable foundation for the future. The goal of equal access and equity in education may be within our grasp, even if it is far from being achieved. Questions and research agendas need to be framed within this broad context.

This discussion suggests three main lines of inquiry and research. The first line of inquiry relates to the "left behind" groups who do not have full access even to mainstream education or who are effectively doomed to fail in current circumstances. These groups notably include students in troubled and conflict communities, students who are vulnerable and disabled, girls (still) in some settings, and—too often—students who are poor and otherwise disadvantaged. Yet there are exciting programs in many parts of the world (for example, the KIPP schools in the United States and Fe y Alegría and Escuela Nueva schools in Latin America), which show that gaps can be bridged. But there are still large gaps and areas where the questions related to "how" have few clear answers.

A second line of inquiry is a focus on ways to promote diversity within a context of common high standards. Development of educational systems that work effectively with the use of indigenous languages is an example of such adaptation, as are systems that make effective use of local environments in teaching at high levels of excellence.

Finally, the third line of inquiry focuses on questions related to civic values and education's contributions to social cohesion. Again, such questions deserve far more purposeful attention.

Translating Ideals Into Realities

The complex challenge of a broadly defined "education for all" ideal has many dimensions, which point to many potential areas for action and many points of responsibility. These actions and responsibilities range from the very global, notably in the framing of the "next generation" global goals (which are to emerge from the United Nations in 2015) to the very local—thus school, family, and individual actions. They also involve efforts to provide decent educational facilities and access for those without. Because a high proportion of those children are out of school in conflict areas or are in hard-to-reach groups and regions, this is no mean challenge. It means both addressing the quality challenges involved in raising standards and moving toward "best practice" educational methodologies on every front—from curriculum design to teacher training and evaluation. A practical challenge is matching education to changing job markets. Social cohesion, values, and "purpose of education" issues are increasingly understood as a core challenge for educational systems.

Amid these complex dimensions of the challenge, five imperatives stand out:

- A critical element in successful education systems is sustained political will. In countries where educational systems are weak, where corruption is rife and teachers are disrespected and disheartened, there may be lip service to education but political will is likely to be feeble. But there also are examples of countries or communities with limited resources where education is a real focus and where remarkable results are achieved.

- The social value of education also counts. What often is ascribed to cultural values also can be shaped—for example, by religious leaders and business. Nurturing cultural values that encourage excellence in education is vital. A culture that respects and values teachers as citizens is another vital ingredient.

- Good education is costly, and resources count. Most resources must come from communities and national or local governments (as well as parents), but wise and ample investments by international organizations and foundations can jump-start and encourage progress.

- Bold initiatives and innovative approaches deserve special attention and support. Some may not succeed, but the need for new ideas is greater than it ever has been.

- And finally a reminder is in order that persistence and perspiration pay off. Equity in education is not about quick fixes. It is about patience and will as well as effort and resources.

Back to Klong Toey and the Mantra "Go to School!"

This essay began with a story of Father Joe, whose mission in a Bangkok slum centers on pushing children toward education as their path to a better future. "Go to school!" is his mantra. He believes that if one priority must be the focus, it is education—both because education allows individuals to develop their intellectual and life skills and because education, in a very practical sense, offers the way up and out of a perpetual slum life. This belief is common among many who work for international development: They believe that education is about human capital and human potential. It is the best remedy for poverty, and it embodies both a faith in human potential and a pragmatic recognition that education alone can prepare individuals and nations for the competitive world of today.

There are catches in this argument, however. The first catch is that education cannot completely remedy the limitations of what the children of Klong Toey exemplify: that many people are severely handicapped from the very start, whether by poverty, by the environment in which they find themselves, or by physical or other disabilities. Expecting them to compete in a "normal" educational environment is asking a lot, perhaps the impossible. Although a few people will rise to the top, most will not. Compensatory help is called for.

The second catch is that education cannot cure all inequities. Children who are sick or malnourished are not likely to succeed. And although education, or a focus on human capabilities, may provide an equal or near equal starting point, it scarcely can ensure equity in life as a whole. There are many other areas to address: gender inequalities, discrimination by race and class, distortions of political outcomes, violence, and war—to name just a few. But if, like Father Joe, you must start somewhere, education for all is a hard goal to beat.

References

Marshall, K. (2010). Gauntlets of equity: Practical ethical challenges for development tomorrow. In C. K. Wilber & A. K. Dutt (Eds.), *New directions in development ethics: Essays in honor of Denis Goulet* (pp. 384–399). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

United Nations. (n.d.). *Millennium Summit (6–8 September 2000)* [Website]. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/millennium_summit.shtml

United Nations. (2014). *The millennium development goals report: 2014*. New York, NY: Author. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2014%20MDG%20report/MDG%202014%20English%20web.pdf

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO]. (2014). *World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, 1990* [Website]. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/the-efa-movement/jomtien-1990/

The World Bank. (2005). *World development report 2006: Equity and development.* New York, NY: Author. Retrieved from http://econ.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=64165259&piPK=64165421&theSitePK=469372&menuPK=64216926&entityID=000112742_20050920110826

Section 2
Education and Mobility as Seen From Differing Perspectives
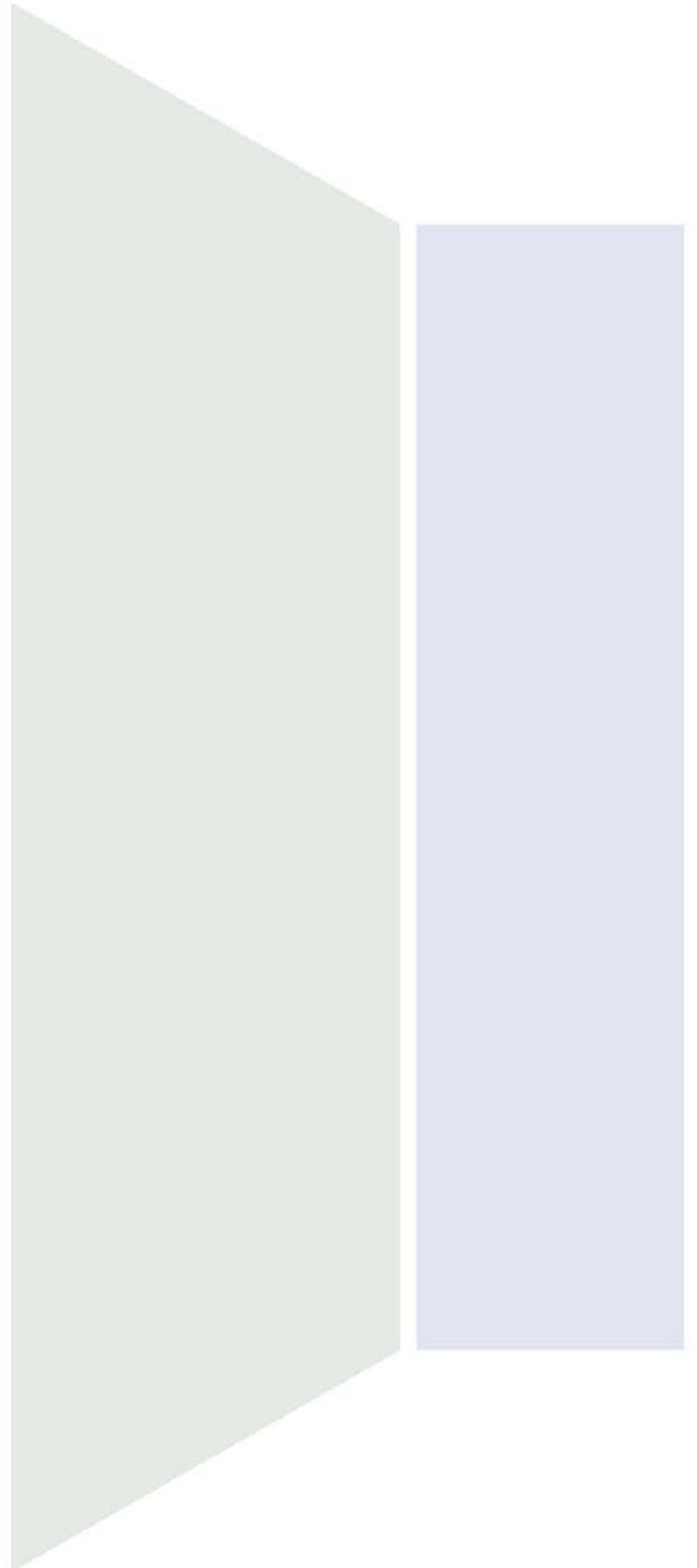
Educational Equity Beyond the School: The Complex Social Factors That Matter for Economic Mobility

Diana Elliott

Research Manager, The Pew Charitable Trusts

Woven deep within the cultural fabric of the United States is the idea that anyone with enough ambition and talent can climb the ladder of opportunity. Most Americans believe that mobility—which is the ability to climb the economic ladder during one's lifetime—is higher in the United States than in other countries. But a growing body of research commissioned and conducted by The Pew Charitable Trusts demonstrates that this is not necessarily the case; consequently, equality of opportunity is not guaranteed to all.

Those raised at the bottom of the economic ladder are highly likely to remain there in adulthood. In fact, 43 percent of those raised at the bottom of the income ladder remain there a generation later, 70 percent never reach the middle, and only 4 percent make it all the way to the top; also, Americans raised at the bottom of the wealth ladder also are likely to remain stuck there (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2012).

This "stickiness" at the bottom affects not only adults but also their children. The lack of economic opportunity for children from low-income families in the United States should give Americans pause; it not only indicates that children born at the bottom begin life at a disadvantage but also contradicts the ideals of most Americans. In a 2011 Pew poll, a majority of Americans identified "children being better off than their parents" as a key tenet of the American Dream (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2011a).

But research on economic mobility also shows that this stickiness is not destiny. In particular, Pew research underscores the power of education to improve the prospects of those raised at the bottom. Although the road to a postsecondary degree is often arduous for children from low-income families, the mobility benefits that such a degree confers are tremendous. Children raised at the bottom of the income ladder who earn college degrees are five times more likely to leave the bottom as adults (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2013b). Compared with their peers who do not earn a bachelor's degree, children raised at the bottom who earn a bachelor's degree are more than three times as likely to make it all the way to the top (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2012). Education, especially a college degree, is one of the most powerful ways in which the cycle of persistent stickiness at the bottom of the economic ladder can be broken.

Despite evidence that children from low-income families benefit enormously from a college education, such children are less likely to both enroll in two- or four-year colleges and complete a degree after enrollment compared with peers from higher income families, even when both groups have similar levels of preparation for college (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2009c). Primary and secondary schools have a clear role to play in preparing children for higher education—and, therefore, upward economic mobility—yet children from low-income families often begin their academic careers at a disadvantage as a result of hurdles related to financial, social, and human capital.

To ensure equality of opportunity for the next generation, researchers and policymakers must acknowledge the relationship between educational attainment and issues such as place-based disparities, the financial well-being and the personal resources of parents, and the changing structure and diversity of the American family. Promoting educational equity means addressing the complex web of factors that affect the disadvantages that students face even before they set foot in a classroom.

Geographic Contexts

Growing evidence shows that place matters a great deal for economic mobility. Neighborhoods are a powerful backdrop that can affect a child's potential for success, regardless of family income. Growing up in a high-poverty neighborhood—even as a member of a middle- or upper-income family—strongly increases a child's risk of downward mobility. Neighborhood poverty also exacerbates the racial mobility gap. A much higher percentage of Black children compared with White children live in high-poverty neighborhoods, and research commissioned by Pew indicates that this environment contributes more to the gap in downward mobility between Blacks and Whites than do parents' education and employment status and a variety of other family factors (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2009a).

Opportunity also is not distributed equally in metropolitan areas. Over the course of recent decades, metropolitan areas have become more economically segregated, meaning that low- and high-income residents live farther apart (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2013a). Metropolitan areas with the greatest economic segregation also are the areas with the least amount of economic mobility, creating an additional barrier to upward mobility for children from low-income families. How strong is this effect? It would take a low-income family in a low-mobility metropolitan area a full four generations to reach the area's average income. A similar family in a high-mobility metropolitan area would arrive there a generation sooner (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2013a).

As neighborhoods and metropolitan areas become increasingly economically segregated, so also do the tax bases that fund schools and the students who attend them. Greater neighborhood and educational equity would ensure that geography does not dictate a child's future opportunities.

Savings and Wealth Building

In addition to macro-level influences such as neighborhood setting and economic segregation in metropolitan areas, micro-level factors also affect mobility. The family context in which children are raised and the educational, personal, and financial resources that parents have to propel the next generation up the economic ladder are critically important. For example, parents who lack adequate savings can make fewer mobility-enhancing investments in themselves and their children.

Among low-income families, children raised by above-average savers are more likely to move up a rung on the income ladder as adults compared with those raised by below-average savers (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2009b). Savings can be used to hire a tutor for one's children, move to a location with top-notch schools, and start and build a college fund—all of which can move a child toward parity with his or her peers, regardless of economic background.

But savings are increasingly scarce for many American families. As a consequence of the Great Recession, wealth declined considerably, and younger Americans, such as those raising school-age children today, lost the most (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2013c). Falling home values have been a significant driver of those wealth losses, even after the Great Recession was declared to have ended.

Home equity losses have broad implications for mobility as well, particularly as a critical link in improving educational outcomes and mobility. Before the Great Recession, home equity was an important tool that low- and middle-income families used to access higher education. Among home-owning families making less than $70,000 per year in the mid-2000s, increased home equity was associated with greater rates of college enrollment and graduation (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2011b).

Completing a college degree is increasingly important for moving up the economic ladder, but the rising cost of higher education, in addition to home equity and other wealth losses, may make college unattainable for many families, especially those at the bottom.

The Changing American Family

Several major changes during the past generation mean that today's families are more diverse and have different needs than they did 30 years ago. For example, the financial security and economic mobility of contemporary families often depend on all adult members working for pay. In the previous generation, mothers of young children were rarely in the workforce; today, families are balancing the competing demands of work and home life in unprecedented numbers. Women's paid work is often crucial for financial well-being, especially among low-income families. For many raised at the bottom, the contributions of today's women (who not only work more hours but also earn higher wages than their mothers did) to family income has propelled them to the middle and higher rungs on the economic ladder (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2014).

With the growing importance of women's earnings to family economic mobility comes the increased recognition that neither workplaces nor educational institutions have adapted to these new realities. The schedules of the school day and the workday often do not align. In particular, low-income parents do not always have the flexibility in their jobs to attend school conferences or meetings, volunteer, or to be as involved in their children's education and in the educational system as they might want to be. Furthermore, parents increasingly need before- or after-school arrangements for their children, and many schools do not meet such needs.

Creating greater educational parity for American children requires acknowledging that today's families are more tethered to work for their financial security than in the past. To the extent that the educational system adapts to this reality, all children—regardless of their families' financial needs—will have more opportunities to thrive, and their parents can participate in the shared goal of success.

The Path Forward

Any proposal to improve educational equity must take into consideration more than just the school context. As described here, place matters, but the financial resources of parents and the

time constraints families face with respect to navigating work and family demands also matter. These are just some examples of the social and economic factors that have shifted in recent years. As a result, the educational system's ability to create equality of opportunity for America's children may be increasingly impaired. The challenge for researchers is to determine how best to improve the prospects for children from low-income families, given the complex and interrelated factors driving disparities in economic mobility and educational equity and the long-term commitments and investments required to change those trends. The research community also must work with policymakers and other stakeholders to build a strong case for more equitable investments in the next generation to prevent the United States from losing the considerable potential of its children, especially those from low-income families.

References

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2009a). *Neighborhoods and the Black-White mobility gap.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/0001/01/01/neighborhoods-and-the-blackwhite-mobility-gap

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2009b). *A penny saved is mobility earned: Advancing economic mobility through savings.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2009/EMPSavingsRe portpdf.pdf

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2009c). *Promoting economic mobility by increasing postsecondary education.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2009/pew_emp_prom oting_upward_mobility.pdf

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2011a). *Economic mobility and the American dream: Where do we stand in the wake of the great recession?* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2011/05/19/economic-mobility-and-the-american-dream-where-do-we-stand-in-the-wake-of-the-great-recession1

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2011b). *Housing wealth and higher education: Building a foundation for economic mobility.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/reports/econo mic_mobility/PewEMPProjectFamilyWealthpdf.pdf

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2012). *Pursuing the American dream: Economic mobility across generations.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2012/PursuingAmeric anDreampdf.pdf

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2013a). *Mobility and the metropolis: How communities factor into economic mobility.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2013/Mobilityandthe Metropolispdf.pdf

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2013b). *Moving on up: Why do some Americans leave the bottom of the economic ladder, but not others?* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/Assets/2013/11/01/MovingOnUpOverviewpdf.pdf

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2013c). *Retirement security across generations: Are Americans prepared for their golden years?* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2013/EMPRetirement v4051013finalFORWEBpdf.pdf

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2014). *Women's work: The economic mobility of women across a generation.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs/content-level_pages/reports/2014/WomensWorkReportEconomicMobilityAcrossaGenerationpdf.pdf

American K–12 Education as Gateway or Gatekeeper: What Must Research Tell Us About How to Secure Educational Opportunity for All?

A. Wade Boykin

Professor and Director of the Graduate Program in the Department of Psychology at Howard University

Backdrop

For several decades, educational policymakers, decision makers, and thought leaders have pushed to the forefront the essential importance of improving the quality of education in the United States. There have been numerous initiatives, quests, urgent and clarion calls for change, and attempts at reform—plus many possible answers. Yet, as a society, we have not been fully satisfied with the ensuing results.

Let's reflect on where we are today in our continuing quest to educate all children and youth to high levels of learning and achievement. Even after *Brown v. Board of Education,* desegregation busing, the compensatory education movement, the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, efforts at community control of schools, open classrooms, the back-to-basics movement, declarations in the landmark book *A Nation at Risk* that a "rising tide of mediocrity" exists in the American schooling process (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the effective schools movement, the New American Schools initiative, the comprehensive school reform movement, the introduction of school choice, the advent of charter schools, and the standards movement, plus being in the midst of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top and with the jury still out on the Common Core State Standards, we still are greatly challenged on how to educate all students to desirable levels of academic accomplishment. Given clear demographic trends in our society, the need to improve the quality of education is more pressing and acute than ever before.

Key Considerations

Several factors must be proactively addressed if we are to change the direction of previous efforts from dashed hopes and promises to better outcomes of increased educational opportunity for all. Although other factors are relevant too, four key factors are elucidated here:

- We must re-envision the purposes and the functions of schooling—and thus the substance of teaching and learning activities—to be consistent with a human capacity-building agenda.

- We must capture our pursuit as not only one of equity but also encompassing the dual goals of equity and excellence.

- We must use a finer grain size to focus more on the proximal processes of everyday classroom dynamics and how these can be optimized. As such, we then shed light on the essential importance of student engagement as an outcome pursuit in learning tasks.

- We must appreciate that converging evidence points to the need for a greater focus on student learning assets, which also must be attached to the need to pay more attention to the emerging importance of student voice.

Clearly, this essay cannot do explanatory justice to all these concerns and others of note. But we need to raise this set of interlocking considerations if we, sooner rather than later, are to make good on our promise to educate all of America's children and youth at high levels of achievement. In due time, future publications can provide the necessary elaboration and expansion.

Toward a Human Capacity-Building Purpose for Formal Schooling

The issue of providing opportunities to learn has caught the attention of many educators in recent years. But to dig deeper, it may be less appropriate to discern not so much that opportunities to learn were provided per se but instead ensure that sufficient, necessary, and appropriate opportunities to learn are pursued in earnest. It is presently argued that this approach requires offering a coherent and heuristic conceptual framework that is consistent with the quest to provide legitimate and potentially attainable educational opportunities for all students. It is posited here that we need to foreground the fundamental purposes for schooling and discern the proper outcomes from teaching and learning activities. It is argued that consistent with this pursuit is a human capacity-building conceptual framework (Boykin, in press).

This framework asserts that it is in the best interests of our society to promote widespread, high-level knowledge, skills, and abilities in intellectual, technical, and civic participation domains for successive cohorts of the diverse American population. Such capacity building is predicated on the presumed reality of integrity in the life experiences of people (students) from diverse backgrounds. Integrity conveys that these experiences and their consequences have complexity, coherence, and depth. Thus, for example, students from educationally marginalized backgrounds should not be construed simply in terms of pathologies, deficits, and weaknesses, wherein improvement is predicated on fixing them because they are broken.

To pursue a human capacity-building approach in earnest would require rejecting some sacred cows, whose existence we have all too often taken for granted. One prime example is the bell curve. All too often, educators and others espouse the notion that all students can learn; yet, they embrace the bell curve as simply reality (Bracey, 1996; Fendler & Muzaffar, 2008). That is, they embrace the actuality that learning capability is normally distributed, with most people falling in the average range and only a few being truly exceptional in their intellectual capacity.

Equity and Excellence

The pursuit of high-quality education for all has been captured substantially in recent years by attempts to close the achievement gap. This pursuit has very often been construed as closing the student achievement gap between majority group and certain minority group populations. Yet, evidence indicates that the scope needs to be wider. International assessments (e.g., the Programme for International Student Assessment and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) in the realms of mathematics, science, and reading point to the lower performance of American students in general compared with their global counterparts, especially

relative to those in certain countries in Europe and Asia. Beyond this, observers have discerned that all too many students in America's classrooms are being prepared for the rigors, realities, and responsibilities of the 20th century—not what will be required of them in the 21st century. As Darling-Hammond and Falk (1997) stated just before the dawn of the 21st century,

> A major goal [for 21st century functioning] is to have [all] students construct, integrate and apply knowledge; to think critically, and invent solutions to problems; and to respond creatively to the unforeseeables that will confront them in the complex world of tomorrow. (p. 51)

Consequently, the achievement gap challenge is three dimensional. To address this challenge, we must not settle only for helping students in the minority group catch up with their majority group counterparts. Indeed, our pursuit should be to raise achievement and attainment levels for all students, given that there is room for improvement overall, while simultaneously raising the outcome levels more steeply for students from certain educationally disenfranchised backgrounds. We must close the gap between preparing students for the 21st century and functioning in the past century. If this set of pursuits becomes our goal, then such renders moot the choice of schooling improvement that focuses on excellence or equity. We must simultaneously pursue in our agenda both equity and excellence and seek evidence of what strategies, practices, and procedures allow this pattern to occur more substantially in America's schools and classrooms.

A Focus on Proximal Processes and Outcomes

Extant research evidence persuades us that teachers must possess content knowledge to deliver high-quality instruction (Hill & Ball, 2009). However, it is also crucial for teachers to provide increased and authentic opportunities for all students to learn—especially students of ethnic minority and low-income backgrounds. Moreover, mounting evidence for what can effectively promote three-dimensional, gap-closing outcomes points to placing more focus squarely on optimizing classroom transactions related to the close-at-hand factors of teaching and learning (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2005). This approach entails optimizing the learning exchanges between teachers and students, and among students themselves, that occur inside classrooms (and other learning settings) on an ongoing and daily basis. These interactions form the foundation of everyday teaching and learning and embody what teachers and students talk about, think about, act on, and believe in. These transactions deal with what students and teachers say, do, understand, or feel with regard to lessons, learning activities, and subject matter inside classrooms on an ongoing and everyday basis.

Still further, opportunities to learn are well captured by the construct of student engagement (Kelly & Turner, 2009; Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). Engagement itself is three dimensional, involving three components: (1) a behavioral component that entails a level of effort and persistence; (2) a motivational component that entails positive interest, value, and affect; and (3) a cognitive component that entails deep processing of information and higher-order thinking skills (Chase, Hilliard, Geldhof, Warren, & Lerner, 2014; Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Wallace & Chhuon, 2014). Substantial evidence exists that enhanced student engagement leads to achievement raising, gap-closing performance outcomes (Ainley & Ainley, 2011; Li & Lerner, 2011; Strambler & Weinstein, 2010).

More attention should be given to the very telling proximal outcome of student engagement. Moreover, recent research illuminates that students' behavioral, motivational, and cognitive engagement in their academic tasks serves as a crucial bellwether for their ultimate academic achievement (American Psychological Association, 2013; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Kelly & Turner, 2009; Wigfield et al., 2008).

A Focus on Student Learning Assets and Student Voice

Ample documentation exists in the extant research literature that asset-based factors, when incorporated into everyday classroom teaching and learning, can be particularly beneficial for students in ethnic minority groups across the K–12 spectrum. As the term *asset-based factors* implies, this approach seeks to acknowledge and build on the assets that students bring with them into the learning setting or create assets for them as needed (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Considerable evidence has been garnered in recent years and indicates that such asset-based factors directly enhance student engagement, which then lead to achievement-raising, gap-closing outcomes. Among the identified factors are the following:

- Positive teacher-student relationship quality, which is marked by caring, support, and high expectations (Graves & Howes, 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Hughes, 2011)

- Collaborative learning, which is marked by collaborative intellectual exchanges among group members (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Slavin, Lake, & Groff, 2009)

- Mastery classroom goal structures, which are marked by a focus on student understanding, effort, and improvement (Fast et al., 2010; Patrick, Kaplan, & Ryan, 2011; Rolland, 2012)

- Meaningful learning, which is marked by a focus on personal relevance and links to prior knowledge and experiences (Cohen, Garcia, Purdie-Vaugns, Apfel, & Brzustoski, 2009; Crumpton & Gregory, 2011)

- Cultural significance, which is marked by links to family socialization and traditions, fundamental core values, and popular culture (Hurley, Allen, & Boykin, 2009; Majors & Ansari, 2008; Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011; Warikoo & Carter, 2010)

- Promotion of the effectiveness and the efficiency of information processing skills, such as problem-solving strategies and critical thinking (Benjamin & Tullis, 2010; Cantrell, Almasi, Carter, Rintamaa, & Madden, 2010; Crosnoe et al., 2010; Ramani & Siegler, 2011; Williams, Brooke-Stafford, Lauer, Hall, & Pollini, 2009)

Space does not permit an elaboration of each factor. However, two examples are provided as exemplars.

Consider the work of Hamre and Pianta (2005), who found that achievement raising, gap-closing outcomes occur for first-grade children who are behaviorally and academically at risk when high emotional and instructional support are consistently present inside classrooms. High emotional support includes factors such as (1) a teacher's sensitivity to a child's needs (e.g., mood, interests); (2) a teacher's reluctance to impose his or her agenda unilaterally onto a child; and (3) a teacher's creation of a positive affective classroom climate (all exemplars of teacher-student relationship

quality). High instructional support includes asking students open-ended questions, such as " What do you think?" (information processing skills), and providing students with feedback that fosters understanding and improvement (mastery goal structure). Elsewhere, Crosnoe et al. (2010) found that in classrooms that promoted inference-based learning techniques marked by engaging students in activities that require, for example, inductive and deductive reasoning (information processing skills), students who initially were low achieving in mathematics (and disproportionately from non-White, low-socioeconomic-status families) improved their mathematics achievement outcomes more steeply from third grade to fifth grade than was the case for students who were average to high achieving (and disproportionately from middle class and White families). This gap-closing pattern did not occur in classrooms that primarily manifested basic skills instruction (i.e., where teaching was geared to yield yes-no or correct-incorrect answers). Moreover, the achievement benefits of inference-based instruction did not occur for students who were initially low achieving if teacher-student relationships were marred by conflict (low teacher-student relationship quality).

Another emerging consideration is taking heed of students' own real-time experiences inside classrooms. Evidence exists that student perceptions of high-quality teaching are systematically understood in elementary school, even in the first grade (Scott, Bruce, & Boykin, 2014). Indeed, taking into account students' self-perceptions of their place in their academic space deserves more systematic attention (Wallace & Chhuon, 2014; Yeager & Walton, 2011).

Among the factors worthy of consideration are the following:

- Mattering, which speaks to a student's feeling that others care about what he or she says, thinks, and does in a classroom setting (Tucker, Dixon, & Griddine, 2010).

- A sense of belonging, which speaks to the feeling that a student is connected to the group, to those in a given academic context (Booker, 2007; Chhuon & Wallace, 2014).

- Hope, which is feeling a sense of optimism about a student's academic future (Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006).

- A relational trust, which is whether a student feels that he or she is in trusting relationships inside the classroom. The literature reveals that such trust is tied to the perceived benevolence, honesty, reliability, and competence of those who provide learning opportunities (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Redburn, 2009).

Some Final Thoughts

It is crucial to note that despite repeated clarion calls for reform, educational historians have illuminated the existence of institutionalized and deeply ingrained schooling practices, which in the last several decades have proven difficult to appreciably alter. Consider the classic paper by David Tyack and William Tobin (1994) titled "The 'Grammar' of Schooling: Why Has It Been So Hard to Change?" The authors argued that enduring ways of "doing schooling" in our social order manifest as the normal, taken-for-granted ways that classroom teaching and learning are simply supposed to be conducted. Borrowing from Larry Cuban (1984), Tyack and Tobin stated that teachers are supposed to monitor and control students, assign tasks to them, ensure that they accomplish these tasks, and then evaluate how well they have done through grades or numerical scores. By extension, numerical scores now also take the form of results on high-stakes educational assessments.

Moreover, during the course of time, these existing practices have been so regularly done—and in particular ways—that they have become routinized within a given school or classroom, thus making these practices and how and why they are conducted highly resistant to change or replacement (Thorius, Maxcy, Macey, & Cox, 2014). It is not hard to understand why this would be the case. As Tyack and Tobin (1994) stated, "Habit is a labor-saving device" (p. 476). Once teachers become accustomed to certain ways of conducting entrenched practices, even when newer or different teaching approaches and purposes are introduced or imposed on them, it is understandable that implementing such new practices and for different educational reasons might be resisted or even cast aside. Although such new ways of doing schooling might make sense or seem potentially beneficial, they still will likely be seen as burdensome or overwhelming, given the myriad demands that other preexisting reforms have already placed on teachers' time and energy. Then, too, such innovative practices may be recast and assimilated into ways of doing schooling with which teachers are already familiar (Thorius et al., 2014). Thus, the fidelity of implementation of the new practices will be compromised. This is further exacerbated by the reality that educators often carry with them normative, existing beliefs and ideologies, even if tacitly, concerning the ability of certain students to do well or where the fault lies when students do not learn what they are being taught (Boykin & Ellison, 2009; Thorius et al., 2014).

This discussion calls into question how we should introduce reforms into school systems, schools, and classrooms. It is advanced presently that we should implement top-down support for actual bottom-up reforms. This means we should start by identifying what proximal processes will work inside classrooms and, on an ongoing basis, promote three-dimensional, gap-closing outcomes for a given setting. The supports and the structures to accomplish this classroom-based focus must be enacted up the administrative and organizational chain. Moreover, this approach profoundly implicates professional development activities for educational practitioners that must move away from the one-shot, one-size-fits-all workshop model toward vehicles predicated on continuous improvement and co-construction with the educational practitioners themselves, who must be seen as agents, not objects, in the change process. Moreover, specific focus should be on helping teachers implement classroom-friendly activities that can readily show increases in student engagement.

Further, it should be expected that the implementation of teacher-chosen, classroom-based activities should be gradual yet incremental and be accompanied by helping teachers recognize when authentic student engagement has occurred. Such occurrences should be linked to the deployment of strategies that teachers have acquired from professional development. In this way, we can lead teachers into thinking differently about what effective classroom teaching and learning look like. Targeted professional development opportunities must be accompanied by sufficient time, resources, and ample constructive and encouraging feedback, if not also classroom demonstrations conducted by coaches. Relatedly, we need to recognize that professional development amounts to adult learning, and, in turn, effective learning is predicated on engagement. Thus, the same factors that work to enhance classroom learning also would work in adult learning contexts. This approach surely has implications for the replication of the proposed professional development process up the administrative ladder for the adult learners at these levels.

Although this essay certainly needs further expansion, I believe that if the issues raised presently are vigorously pursued, we stand a better chance of American education more likely serving as a gateway, not a gatekeeper, for all of America's children and youth.

References

Ainley, M., & Ainley, J. (2011). Student engagement with science in early adolescence: The contribution of enjoyment to students' continuing interest in learning about science. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 36,* 4–12.

American Psychological Association. (2012). *Ethnic and racial disparities in education: Psychology's contributions to understanding and reducing disparities.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/ed/resources/racial-disparities.pdf

Benjamin, A. S., & Tullis, J. (2010). What makes distributed practice effective? *Cognitive Psychology, 61,* 228–247.

Booker, K. (2007). Likeness, comfort, and tolerance: Examining African-American adolescents' sense of school belonging. *Urban Review, 39,* 301–317.

Boykin, A. W. (in press). Human diversity, assessment in education and the achievement of excellence and equity. *Journal of Negro Education.*

Boykin, A. W., & Ellison, C. M. (2009). The Talent Quest model and the educating of African-American children. In H. A. Neville, B. M. Tynes, & S. O. Utsey (Eds.), *Handbook of African American psychology* (pp. 237–252). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Boykin, A. W., & Noguera, P. (2011). *Creating the opportunity to learn: Moving from research to practice to close the achievement gap.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Bracey, G. W. (1996). The sixth Bracey report on the condition of public education. *Phi Delta Kappan, 78,* 127–138.

Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2003). Trust in schools: A core resource for school reform. *Educational Leadership, 60,* 40–44.

Cantrell, S. C., Almasi, J. F., Carter, J. C., Rintamaa, M., & Madden, A. (2010). The impact of a strategy-based intervention on the comprehension and strategy use of struggling adolescent readers. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102,* 257–280.

Chase, P. A., Hilliard, L. J., Geldhof, G. J., Warren, D. J. A., & Lerner, R. M. (2014). Academic achievement in the high school years: The changing role of school engagement. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 43,* 883–896.

Chhuon, V., & Wallace, T. L. (2014). Creating connectedness through being known: Fulfilling the need to belong in U.S. high schools. *Youth & Society, 46,* 379–401.

Cohen, G. L., Garcia, J., Purdie-Vaugns, V., Apfel, N., & Brzustoski, P. (2009). Recursive processes in self-affirmation: Intervening to close the minority achievement gap. *Science, 324,* 400–403.

Crosnoe, R., Morrison, F., Burchinal, M., Pianta R., Keating, D., Friedman, S. L., et al. (2010). Instruction, teacher-student relations, and math achievement trajectories in elementary school. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102,* 407–417.

Crumpton, H. E., & Gregory, A. (2011). "I'm not learning": The role of academic relevancy for low-achieving students. *The Journal of Educational Research, 104,* 42–53.

Cuban, L. (1984). *How teachers taught.* New York, NY: Longman.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Falk, B. (1997). Supporting teaching and learning for all students: Policies for authentic assessment. In A. Lin Goodwin (Ed.), *Assessment for equity and inclusion: Embracing all our children* (pp. 51–76). New York, NY: Routledge.

Fast, L. A., Lewis, J. L., Bryant, M. J., Bocian, K. A., Cardullo, R. A., Rettig, M., et al. (2010). Does math self-efficacy mediate the effect of the perceived classroom environment on standardized math test performance? *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102,* 729–740.

Fendler, L., & Muzaffar, I. (2008). The history of the bell curve: Sorting and the idea of normal. *Educational Theory, 58,* 63–82.

Fredericks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74,* 59–109.

Graves, S., & Howes, C. (2011). Ethnic differences in social-emotional development: The impact of teacher child relationships and classroom quality. *School Psychology Quarterly, 26,* 202–214.

Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2005). Can instructional and emotional support in the first-grade classroom make a difference for children at risk of school failure? *Child Development, 76,* 949–967.

Hill, H., & Ball, D. L. (2009). The curious—and crucial—case of mathematical knowledge for teaching. *Phi Delta Kappan, 91,* 68–71.

Hoy, W. K., Tarter, C. J., & Hoy, A. W. (2006). Academic optimism of schools: A force for student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 43,* 425–446.

Hughes, J. N. (2011). Longitudinal effects of teacher and student perceptions of teacher-student relationship qualities on academic adjustment. *The Elementary School Journal, 112,* 38–60.

Hurley, E. A., Allen, B. A., & Boykin, A. W. (2009). Culture and interaction of student ethnicity with reward structure in group learning. *Cognition and Instruction, 27,* 121–146.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2009). An educational psychology success story: Social interdependence theory and cooperative learning. *Educational Researcher, 38,* 365–379.

Kelly, S., & Turner, J. (2009). Rethinking the effects of classroom activity structure on the engagement of low-achieving students. *Teachers College Record, 111,* 1665–1692.

Li, Y., & Lerner, R. M. (2011). Trajectories of school engagement during adolescence: Implications for grades, depression, delinquency, and substance use. *Developmental Psychology, 47,* 233–247.

Majors, Y., & Ansari, S. (2008). Cultural community practices as urban classroom resources. In L. Tillman (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of African American education* (pp. 107–122). New York, NY: Sage.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html

Patrick, H., Kaplan, A., & Ryan, A. M. (2011). Positive classroom motivational environments: Convergence between mastery goal structure and the classroom social climate. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 103,* 367–382.

Ramani, G. B., & Siegler, R. S. (2011). Reducing the gap in numerical knowledge between low- and middle-income preschoolers. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 32,* 146–159.

Redburn, M. K. (2009). Developing relational trust in schools through a consensus process. *NCPEA Educational Leadership Review, 10,* 1–20.

Rolland, R. G. (2012). Synthesizing the evidence on classroom goal structures in middle and secondary schools: A meta-analysis and narrative review. *Review of Educational Research, 82,* 396–435.

Sampson, D., & Garrison-Wade, D. F. (2011). Cultural vibrancy: Exploring the preferences of African-American children toward culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant lessons. *Urban Review, 43,* 279–309.

Scott, D. M., Bruce, A. W., & Boykin, A. W. (2014). A qualitative analysis of low-income minority students' perceptions of high-quality teaching. Manuscript in preparation.

Skinner, E. A., Kindermann, T. A., & Furrer, C. (2009). A motivational perspective on engagement and disaffection: Conceptualization and assessment of children's behavioral and emotional participation in academic activities in the classroom. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 69,* 493–525.

Slavin, R. E., Lake, C., & Groff, C. (2009). Effective programs in middle and high school mathematics: A best evidence synthesis. *Review of Educational Research, 79,* 839–911.

Strambler, M., & Weinstein, R. (2010). Psychological disengagement in elementary school among ethnic minority students. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 31,* 155–165.

Thorius, K. A. K., Maxcy, B. D., Macey, E., & Cox, A. (2014). A critical practice analysis of response to intervention appropriation in an urban school. *Remedial and Special Education, 35,* 287–299.

Tucker, C., Dixon, A., & Griddine, K. (2010). Academically successful African-American male urban high school students' experiences of mattering to others at school. *Professional School Counseling, 14,* 135–145.

Tyack, D., & Tobin, W. (1994). The "grammar" of schooling: Why has it been so hard to change? *American Educational Research Journal, 31,* 453–479.

Wallace, T. L., & Chhuon, V. (2014). Proximal processes in urban classrooms: Engagement and disaffection in urban youth of color. *American Educational Research Journal, 51,* 937–973.

Warikoo, N., & Carter, P. (2009). Cultural explanations for racial and ethnic stratification in academic achievement: A call for a new and improved theory. *Review of Educational Research, 79,* 366–394.

Wigfield, A., Guthrie, J. T., Perencevich, K. C., Taboada, A., Klauda, S. L., McRae, A., et al. (2008). Role of reading engagement in mediating effects of reading comprehension instruction on reading outcomes. *Psychology in the Schools, 45,* 432–445.

Williams, J. P., Brooke-Stafford, K., Lauer, K. D., Hall, K. M., & Pollini, S. (2009). Embedding reading comprehension training in content-area instruction. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 101,* 1–20.

Yeager, D. S., & Walton, G. M. (2011). Social-psychological interventions in education: They're not magic. *Review of Educational Research, 81,* 267–301.

Authentic Educational Opportunities in the Midst of Deepening Social and Economic Inequalities: A Cautionary Note

Lois Weis

Distinguished Professor, State University of New York at Buffalo

Understanding Inequalities

In *Capital in the 21st Century,* Thomas Piketty (2014) argues that the "great equalizing decades following World War II, which brought on the rise of the middle class in the United States, were but a historical anomaly" (Dewan, 2014). His painstakingly researched volume set in motion widespread discussions of the inequalities of capital and privilege in a shifting global economic context. Such deepening inequalities are largely driven by soaring levels of executive compensation and finance that contribute to explosive growth in wealth among the top 1 percent in the United States. Such intensified concentration of wealth among top earners (Piketty & Saez, 2012; Saez, 2013) means that the vast majority of highly educated professionals (as well as those who inherited wealth from their parents) find their relative positions substantially eroding compared with the class of superrich financiers and senior managers.[1]

In this new relationship between education and social reproduction, the extent to which and the ways in which schooling is linked to social and economic outcomes changes markedly. As Weis, Cipollone, and Jenkins (2014) argued, relatively privileged families exhibit an increasingly relentless drive to create "distinction" for their children by accessing a broadened range of particularly located postsecondary educational destinations—especially those marked as "most competitive" and "highly competitive plus" according to classification systems such as *Barron's Profile of American Colleges* (Barron's College Division Staff, 2009, 2013) and selective programs within K–12 institutions that are understood to increase advantage. In this sense, the erosion of jobs that enabled stable economic futures in past decades currently presses toward an intensified drive to create distinction through the educational sector. Coupled with widespread disinvestment in U.S. public schools (Lipman, 2011), this works—among other factors—to produce notable and widening class-based gaps in both educational achievement and attainment.

Recent work by Reardon (2011), Bailey and Dynarski (2011), and others has underscored this point. In an essay on the widening academic achievement gap (defined here as the income difference between a child from a family at the 90th percentile of the family income distribution and a child from a family at the 10th percentile), Reardon drew on data from 19 nationally representative studies to assess the long-term relationship between income and academic achievement in the United States. Probing the extent to which the widening of income inequality in the previous 40 years has been paralleled by a similar increase in the income-achievement gradient, Reardon concluded that "the achievement gap between children from high- and low-income families is roughly 30 to 40 percent larger among children born in 2001 than among

---

[1] See Piketty and Saez's (2012) tables on this, updated regularly and published online through Saez's office at the University of California–Berkeley, and Piketty (2014).

those born twenty-five years earlier" (p. 21). Reardon further suggested that "the income achievement gap has been growing for at least fifty years, though the data are less certain for cohorts of children born before 1970" (p. 21). Because the income achievement gap is now nearly twice as large as the Black–White achievement gap, class (not race) is now a greater predictor of achievement in the United States. In contrast, 50 years ago, the Black–White gap was estimated to be between 1.5 and two times as large as the income gap.

The intensification of class-based differences in educational achievement and attainment is similarly evident at the postsecondary level. As massification of higher education brings more students into college, race/ethnicity and class stratification play out in new and more complex ways (Weis et al., 2014), and the choice of a postsecondary educational destination rather than a two-year versus four-year (or undifferentiated four-year) college takes on heightened importance (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Weis et al., 2014). Although students of all racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds are increasingly accessing postsecondary education, less selective two- and four-year institutions account for much of the expansion (Arum, Gamoran, & Shavit, 2007), rendering the "access to what?" question increasingly critical.

Gamoran (2008) concluded that despite increased numerical access, social class inequality in educational attainment is increasing, which has been affirmed in later studies (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011; Bowen et al., 2009). Although most higher education expansion is occurring at the two-year level, research indicates that students from advantaged social class backgrounds are increasing their share of places at top-tier, four-year institutions, which results in fewer spaces at those institutions for students from low-income families relative to those from privileged families. Further, it is not just the top tier where there is a decline in students from low-income families. In general, such students are less likely to be enrolled in any four-year institution than they were 10 years ago (Thomas & Bell, 2008).

In light of deepening economic and educational inequalities, a slice of the middle class now works harder than ever to pull away from its collective class base by preparing for and accessing certain postsecondary destinations, most specifically those marked as "most competitive" and "highly competitive plus" (Barron's College Division Staff, 2009, 2013). Rather than humorously poking fun at a slice of middle-class parents who are generally seen to pathologically overmonitor their children in the college admissions process, researchers must move toward an understanding of new and distinctly located class processes that are designed to stake out or preserve privilege in an entirely new context—a set of processes with deep implications for working-class and low-income families. Challenging the catchy, media-driven construct of the "helicopter parent," parents must be repositioned as class actors in very specific and constricting environments—the global economy and the postsecondary sector itself—where inequalities are deepening, abetted by institutional restratification in higher education. From this perspective, the class battle sits at the epicenter of the college admissions process. Rather than seeing this situation as a battle fought by neurotically driven parents who hang onto their children far longer than what is good for them, this deeply waged battle over future class position now takes place within homes and schools at the same time as class winners and losers become even more apparent.

As recent research (Weis et al., 2014) demonstrates, relatively privileged families increasingly seek to instantiate educational and economic opportunities for their children at the same time as such within-nation opportunities are objectively becoming scarcer (Brown, Lauder, & Ashton,

2011). Those who are well educated—and those who are not—now live and work inside a globally driven knowledge economy that alters the availability of particular kinds of jobs. Given the realities of this new economy, this is accompanied by the intensified privileging of particular kinds of educational credentials at the same time as access to and the availability of such credentials becomes more widely distributed across the globe. And this is occurring simultaneously as inequalities of capital and privilege are exploding, thus creating a situation wherein the vast majority of highly educated professionals (as well as those who inherited wealth from their parents) find their relative positions substantially eroded. This then heightens levels of anxiety among parents and students with regard to future class position—anxieties that they seek to resolve by entering particular kinds of postsecondary educational destinations.

Stories about the lengths to which the parents of middle- and upper-middle-class students are willing to go in light of the increasingly competitive college admissions process flourish in the popular press. For example, a recent *New York Times* article highlighted the rising trend among parents to enroll children, as young as 2 years old, in Kumon classes[2] to give them a leg up in competitive kindergarten admissions (Zernike, 2011), presumably with an eye toward admission to highly selective colleges and universities. In the well-known film *Race to Nowhere* (2009), a young child reflected on the dizzying array of homework and scheduled activities that undergirded his life. Lamenting the loss of free time, he noted that everything is now about "preparing for college."

My point here is that those with privilege are not sitting still in the face of either shifting economic conditions or the massification of higher education with its accompanying mantra of "college for all." Those with privilege are wildly stepping up their game, mobilizing all available economic, social, and cultural capitals to position their children for advantage. As poverty and privilege are fundamentally coproduced, educational and economic inequalities can never be understood in relationship to actions and activities among or related to only low-income and working-class families. It is equally as important to focus on privilege and those who currently have it: what it is and the ways in which privileged groups work to create and maintain what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) calls "distinction"; the educational institutions they populate; and the ways in which and the extent to which such institutions transmit and solidify advantage for those who already possess it (Weis et al., 2014). Of course, those with privilege are not immutable, and select students from low-income and working-class families now attend some of America's finest postsecondary destinations. That said, individual and collective logics are markedly different, and although the individual can—at times—monumentally scale the class structure, the class itself can never follow.

Peering Beneath the "College for All" Mantra: A Brief Focus on the Postsecondary Sector

As for issues related to postsecondary access and outcomes in light of the mantra "college for all," the extent to which those with privilege are targeting access to a broadened group of particularly located educational destinations (beyond historic Ivy League institutions) deserves attention. Although data are drawn from the U.S. context, evidence suggests that this phenomenon is occurring in many countries.

---

[2] For more information, see http://www.kumon.com.

It is well known that the number of students applying to and attending postsecondary institutions in the United States has grown dramatically in the past 60 years, spiking from 2.3 million students in 1947 to more than 18.7 million students in 2007 (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2011; Snyder, Tan, & Hoffman, 2006). Between 2000 and 2010, college enrollment increased 37 percent, from 15.3 million to 21.0 million. Much of this growth is in full-time enrollment; for example, between 2000 and 2010, the number of full-time students increased 45 percent, whereas the number of part-time students increased 26 percent. Analysts widely agree that increased numbers in higher education represent expansion of access, not simple population growth (Thomas & Bell, 2008).

It also is widely understood that the massive growth in college attendance has been accompanied by a shift of proportion of institutional types, with 72 percent of the growth in public institutions being accounted for by growth in the two-year college sector (Thomas & Bell, 2008). Such expansion accompanied by institutional differentiation suggests that "at the same time that members of the working class found new opportunities to enroll in higher education, the system was being hierarchically differentiated so that these new opportunities may have had diminished value" (Arum et al., 2007, p. 1). Stated more simply, although the system has massified, access probably hasn't. A more nuanced understanding of access clearly leads to the conclusion that class inequalities have markedly intensified, not diminished. As Lucas (2001) noted, even as quantitative distinctions fade (there is increased access to any given broad sector, such as college or university entrance), inequality will be "effectively maintained" through increased differentiation within that level—in the United States and elsewhere (Turley, Santos, & Ceja, 2007). This happens as more privileged populations seek advantages for their children for gaining admission to selective colleges and universities rather than assume that access to an undifferentiated four-year sector will provide short- and long-term outcomes.

In the United States, students from working-class and low-income families are, in fact, entering colleges and universities in greater numbers than ever before (Ellwood & Kane, 2000). Although research on linkages between the type and the selectivity of the postsecondary institution attended are certainly not new (Karabel, 1972), evidence suggests that the class-related gap in the type of institution attended is widening—not narrowing—under conditions of massification. As Thomas and Bell (2008) demonstrated, although students who are less privileged increasingly are attending higher education institutions, attendance at the most selective of these institutions (i.e., well beyond historic Ivy League institutions) increasingly consists of students who are more privileged. Using the Pell Grant as a proxy for low income, Thomas and Bell noted that "it is not just the most selective institutions which are seeing lower numbers of low-income students. Low-income students are less likely to be in four-year institutions in general than they were a decade ago" (p. 281).

This phenomenon becomes critically important because where one attends college exerts both short- and long-term effects. Bowen et al. (2009) and Stephan, Rosenbaum, and Person (2009) noted increased differential persistence and graduation rates by selectivity of the institution, a set of relationships that holds even when the relevant entering characteristics of students are held constant in the analysis. Beyond higher rates of persistence and graduation, selective institutions are better resourced than less selective institutions (Leslie, Slaughter, Taylor, & Zhang, 2012) and confer on their graduates both special entrée to the best graduate and professional programs in the United States (Eide, Brewer, & Ehrenberg, 1998) and well-documented labor market

advantages (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Rumberger & Thomas, 1993; Thomas, 2000; Thomas & Zhang, 2005).

Although the drivers of the current reconstitution of the status hierarchy of postsecondary destinations in the United States are quite complex, the extent to which those with privilege envision particular kinds of institutions as a way to forge or maintain advantage for the next generation must be taken into account. Students from low-income and working-class families have objectively made great strides with regard to number of years of schooling in the United States, with much higher proportions than ever before entering postsecondary institutions. As Roksa (2012) and others have demonstrated, however, students from low-income and working-class families do not graduate at rates commensurate with those of students from privileged backgrounds. Even if they did, such improvement pales compared with that of the privileged, who exhibit seemingly naturalized capacity to run harder and faster.

Rather than being reflective of naturally occurring and wholly inevitable patterns toward increasing inequality, however, researchers must acknowledge that those involved in the production of privilege (parents, children, schools, colleges, and universities) work exceptionally hard—day to day and year after year —to ensure that their own privileged position and that of their children is maintained despite the recognized numeric widening of opportunities, particularly at the postsecondary level. Such consciously engaged "class work," as I call it, enables those with privilege to position the next generation for advantage to a far greater degree than is collectively possible for students from low-income and working-class families, no matter what efforts are made toward equalizing opportunities.

Privileged secondary schools—both public and private—specifically work to advantage students in the college application and admissions process. Cookson and Persell (1985) offered early work on private school advantages, specifically the ways in which boarding schools prepare students for power. More recent work by Gatzambide-Fernández (2009) and Demerath (2009) in private and public schools, respectively, and Weis et al. (2014) in both private and public schools pinpointed specific and intentionally activated school-based mechanisms that confer advantage in relatively privileged secondary schools. This includes a sustained and deep focus on high-status knowledge; targeted attention to tutoring and preparing for college entrance tests; the editing of college essays and applications; and detailed attention and training to develop an "admissions strategy," an increasingly specialized skill that is a necessary but not sufficient condition for entrance to top-tier colleges.

Entrance to such top-tier colleges further contributes to the architecture of capital accumulation because particularly located postsecondary destinations—in and of themselves—contribute to inequalities on the other end. The point here is that by explicit work or design as well as a sense of what is understood to be individually and collectively possible both economically and psychologically, relative privilege is maintained through educational institutions. This result is accomplished by what low-income and working classes do not get by virtue of schooling plus what the children of the privileged do get—and indeed are able to command and actualize—by virtue of their own located set of experiences.

Conclusion

My intent in this essay is neither to deter nor to dismiss authentic efforts at increasing opportunities for students from low-income families and those who are historically disenfranchised. Without question, policymakers and researchers must press forward with such efforts and continue to pressure a larger range of agencies to work toward this goal. My intent is to introduce a cautionary note to the conversation because the production of educational and economic inequalities can never be fully understood with singular reference to low-income, historically marginalized populations. Those with privilege are now running harder and faster to position the next generation for advantage, leaving students from low-income and working-class families with increasingly little ground on which to compete. Only by looking across the social structure with a keen eye toward understanding the roots and the consequences of existing inequalities can reform efforts be leveraged toward genuine opportunities for students from low-income families and those who are historically disenfranchised. Put differently, researchers and policymakers must collectively acknowledge the full landscape of educational inequalities and outcomes and the mechanisms through which poverty and privilege are actually coproduced and maintained.

References

Arum, R., Gamoran, A., & Shavit, Y. (2007). More inclusion than diversion: Expansion, differentiation, and market structure in higher education. In Y. Shavit, R. Arum, & A. Gamoran (Eds.), *Stratification in higher education: A comparative study* (pp. 1–38). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bailey, M. J., & Dynarski, S. M. (2011). Inequality in postsecondary education. In G. J. Duncan & R. J. Murnane (Eds.), *Whither opportunity? Rising inequality, schools, and children's life chances* (pp. 117–131). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Barron's College Division Staff. (2009). *Barron's profiles of American colleges* (28th ed.). Hauppauge NY: Barron's Educational Series.

Barron's College Division Staff. (2013). *Profiles of American colleges* (30th ed.). Hauppauge NY: Barron's Educational Series.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bowen, W. G., Chingos, M. M., & McPherson, M. S. (2009). *Crossing the finish line: Completing college at America's public universities.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bowen, W., & Bok, D. (1998). *The shape of the river: Long-term consequences of considering race in college and university admissions.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Brown, P., Lauder, H., & Ashton, D. (2011). *The global auction: The promise of education, jobs, and income.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Cookson, P., & Persell, C. (1985). *Preparing for power: America's elite boarding schools.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Demerath, P. (2009). *Producing success: The culture of personal advancement in an American high school.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Dewan, S. (2014, March 25). Who needs a boss? *The New York Times Magazine.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/30/magazine/who-needs-a-boss.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Aw&_r=0

Eide, E., Brewer, D., & Ehrenberg, R. (1998). Does it pay to attend an elite private college? Evidence of the effect of undergraduate college quality on graduate school attendance. *Economics of Education Review, 17,* 371–376.

Ellwood, D., & Kane, T. J. (2000). Who is getting a college education? Family background and the growing gaps in enrollment. In S. Danziger & J. Waldfogel (Eds.), *Securing the future* (pp. 283–324). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Gamoran, A. (2008). Persisting social class inequality in U.S. education. In L. Weis (Ed.), *The way class works: Readings on school, family, and the economy* (pp. 169–179). New York, NY: Routledge.

Gatzambide-Fernández, R. (2009). *The best of the best: Becoming elite at an American boarding school.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Karabel, J. (1972). Community colleges and social stratification. *Harvard Educational Review, 42,* 521–562.

Knapp, L., Kelly-Reid, J., & Ginder, S. (2011). *Enrollment in postsecondary institutions, fall 2009; graduation rates, 2003 & 2006 cohorts; and financial statistics, fiscal year 2009.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011230.pdf

Lipman, P. (2011). *The new political economy of urban education: Neo-liberalism, race, and the right to the city.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Leslie, L. L., Slaughter, S., Taylor, B. J., & Zhang, L. (2012). How do revenue variations affect expenditures within U.S. research universities? *Research in Higher Education, 53*(6), 614–649.

Lucas, S. (2001). Effectively maintained inequality: Education transitions, track mobility, and social background effects. *American Journal of Sociology, 106,* 1642–1690.

Piketty, P., & Saez, E. (2012, November). *Top incomes and the great recession: Recent evolution and policy implications.* Paper presented at the 13th Jacques Polak Annual Research Conference, Washington, DC.

Piketty, T. (2014). *Capital in the 21st century.* Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

Reardon, S. F. (2011). The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations. In G. J. Duncan & R. J. Murnane (Eds.). *Whither opportunity? Rising inequality, schools, and children's life chances* (pp. 91–116). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Roksa, J. (2012). Race, class, and bachelor's degree completion in American higher education: Examining the role of life course transitions. In L. Weis & N. Dolby (Eds.), *Social class and education: Global perspectives* (pp. 51–70). New York, NY: Routledge.

Rumberger, R. W., & Thomas, S. L. (1993). The economic returns to college major, quality and performance: A multilevel analysis of recent graduates. *Economics of Education Review, 12,* 1–19.

Saez, E. (2013). *Striking it richer: The evolution of top incomes in the United States* (updated with 2012 preliminary estimates). Retrieved from http://eml.berkeley.edu/~saez/saez-UStopincomes-2012.pdf

Snyder, T. D., Tan, A. G., & Hoffman, C. M. (2006). *Digest of education statistics 2005* (NCES 2006-030). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Stephan, J. L., Rosenbaum, J. E., & Person, A. E. (2009). Stratification in college entry and completion. *Social Science Research, 38*(3), 572–593.

Thomas, S. (2000). Deferred costs and economic returns to college quality, major and academic performance: An analysis of recent graduates in baccalaureate and beyond. *Research in Higher Education, 44*(3), 263–299.

Thomas, S. L., & Bell, A. (2008). Social class and higher education: A reorganization of opportunities. In L. Weis (Ed.), *The way class works: Readings on school, family, and the economy* (pp. 273–287). New York, NY: Routledge.

Thomas, S. L., & Zhang, L. (2005). Changing rates of return to college quality and academic major in the United States: Who gets good jobs in America? *Research in Higher Education, 46*(4), 437–459.

Turley, R. N. L., Santos, M., & Ceja, C. (2007). Social origin and college opportunity expectations across cohorts. *Social Science Research, 36*(3), 1200–1218.

Weis, L., Cipollone, K., & Jenkins, H. (2014). *Class warfare: Class and race in affluent and elite secondary schools.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Zernike, K. (2011, May 13). Fast-tracking to kindergarten? *The New York Times.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/fashion/with-kumon-fast-tracking-to-kindergarten.html?pagewanted=all

What Is America's Premier Equal-Opportunity Institution?

David B. Grusky

Director, Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality

It is well known that the United States runs a socioeconomic safety net that, relative to those of other rich countries, is anemic and underfunded. But why is this so? It is partly because our safety net is not seen as expressing our country's most cherished commitments. Whereas institutions like the family, church, and school are viewed as sacred and essential, the safety net is seen as some foreign entity that is inconsistent with the "American way" and that should be starved and shrunk to the extent possible.

Yet this conventional understanding of the safety net misrepresents what it actually does. Far from being some foreign institution, the safety net expresses the country's long-standing commitment to equalizing opportunity, a commitment that is so central to the country's history that it even shows up in America's founding documents.

The safety net is, of course, a sprawling affair that resists any simple description. It encompasses food stamps, home visiting programs, early childhood education, workforce training programs, tax credits, and much more. Because it is so sprawling, any characterization of its purpose and function will be a simplification, but nonetheless we work with such simplifications all the time. For each of the country's institutions, Americans develop "just-so" stories about why that institution is important and what role it plays, stories that then affect how much they are willing to support those institutions. My key claim is the safety net has not garnered as much support as it should because it has not been properly represented as an institution that furthers the country's commitment to equal opportunity. Rather, the safety net typically is viewed as a form of charity, a story that often falls short because conflicts with other more deeply held principles.

Let's first look at the usual justification for the country's safety net and then at an alternative account that better represents what the safety net actually does.

The Principle of Charity

How, then, do Americans usually justify the need for a safety net? It is understood as a form of charity that, given how rich the United States is, would be wrong to deny to those who need our help. Because the safety net is taken as a form of charity, many have argued that federal assistance should be offloaded to nongovernmental charitable organizations that know how to do charity especially well. Although the safety-net-as-charity formulation is embraced and practiced by many nongovernmental organizations, it meshes especially well with the charitable mission of religious organizations.

The conception of the safety net as a form of charity is so long-standing, so thoroughly diffused, and so taken for granted that surely there is no need to elaborate any further on it. This conception nonetheless comes with a cost: It undermines our support for the safety net. Although the safety-net-as-charity conception appeals to many religious and other nonprofit organizations, it also is readily represented as a naive form of do-gooding that fails to take into account the

moral hazard that profligate or poorly designed charity work can bring about. The standard claim here is that, insofar as the safety net incentivizes nonwork activities, it undermines the country's commitment to the work ethic and perpetuates the very poverty it seeks to eliminate.

This concern with moral hazard was the cornerstone of the Republican "Contract with America,"[1] but it would be a mistake to understand it as solely a niche Republican concern. Indeed, even President Clinton promised to "end welfare as we have come to know it," a 1992 campaign promise that ultimately led to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. This law was widely understood as a reassertion of the country's work ethic and an attempt to craft a safety net that is purged of moral hazard.

It is nonetheless striking that this 1996 law, although a far-reaching overhaul of America's safety net, did not bring about any revolutionary change in the story we tell about it. The safety net is still understood as a form of charity, and the same rhetoric thus continues to be used to attack it. This rhetoric surfaced, for example, in the 2012 presidential election, when Republican candidate Mitt Romney referred to the "47 percent who...believe the government has a responsibility to care for them," and it continues to be featured as the 2016 presidential campaign ramps up. Why is the safety net vulnerable to a warmed-over version of a critique now some 20 years old? It remains vulnerable because, despite far-reaching reforms that eliminated the disincentives of the pre-Clinton safety net, we still tell the same safety-net-as-charity story about what it does. It is high time to shed this old and outdated narrative in favor of an authentic understanding of what the safety net *actually* does.

The Investment Narrative

Should Americans turn to the increasingly popular "investment narrative" as a more compelling rationale for the safety net? This, unfortunately, is not the answer. The investment narrative certainly has changed how the safety net's legitimacy is understood, but it is ultimately an incomplete narrative founded on a limited understanding of what makes Americans commit to an institution.

The investment narrative is nonetheless radical for its recasting of poverty policy as a strictly utilitarian calculation. In deciding whether to undertake any given policy, it tells us to ask whether it yields a better return on investment than the alternatives. By contrast, the conventional safety-net-as-charity approach implies that, no matter the return, there is *always* an ethical obligation to assist those in need. Under the investment formulation, an anti-poverty program is treated like any other possible investment, with the implication that it should be undertaken only insofar as doing so maximizes returns. If the requisite returns are not there, then the investment narrative does not, in itself, call for any anti-poverty programming. Although in principle an investment narrative could delegitimate the safety net, in practice it has not done so because the evidence suggests that many anti-poverty programs have very favorable returns.

Is this, then, the new winning narrative that will bring about widespread public support for anti-poverty programming? Hardly. This is partly because the task of determining the payoff to a

---

[1] The Contract with America, authored by conservative Republicans in 1994, aimed to shrink the size of government, lower taxes, and reform the welfare system.

proposed program often is very difficult. As is well known, randomized controlled trials or high-quality nonexperimental assessments are not always feasible, thus making it hard to assess the effects of any given program, let alone decide which of many possible programs yield the most attractive returns. Although our experimental and nonexperimental apparatus for causal inference is better than ever, it is not always good enough to reach definitive conclusions on all the programs and policies of interest. It is simply no easy task to assemble a coherent program on the basis of rigorous cost-benefit evidence alone.

But such evidentiary problems are not even the most important ones. The more fundamental concern is that an investment approach would, in itself, yield a cacophony of programs that do not necessarily amalgamate into anything workable. Even if the scientific evidence were definitive and comprehensive, the resulting assemblage of "what works" would not likely form a coherent institutional package or take into account our larger commitments about how our institutions are best organized. It is obviously important that our institutions make sense to us: If an anti-poverty program does not resonate well with core American values, our support for it will be partial and mired in controversy. The cost-benefit framework, while certainly a necessary component of a viable anti-poverty program, is thus hardly a full and sufficient foundation. For most Americans, our institutions and programs not only should "work" in some narrow sense but also should be consistent with our most fundamental beliefs about how they should be run.

The Equal-Opportunity Rationale

What, then, is the winning normative foundation for a robust safety net? If one takes a dispassionate view of what the safety net *actually* does, it is hard not to be struck by its role in ensuring that all children—no matter how poor their parents may be—have some measure of opportunity to lead a decent life. In the United States, all children are supposed to have the opportunity to develop their capacities—even children whose parents are poor. It is no easy task to realize this commitment insofar as well-off parents can afford high-quality health care, child care, and schooling in ways that then advantage their children in securing later opportunities. The core function of the safety net is to compensate poor parents, if only partially and incompletely, for these advantages.

This argument about what the safety net "really does" is admittedly a strong one. It is accordingly important to consider it carefully for a range of safety net programs, including the home visiting program, early childhood education, late interventions, and even the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Home Visiting Program

The leading arm of the safety net, the home visiting program, provides information on health and parenting to families of at-risk children in ways that ensure that they fully realize their capacities. This program rests on the growing evidence that prenatal and early childhood experiences affect neural functions and structures that, in turn, shape future cognitive, social, emotional, and health outcomes. Even at 18 months old, children from poorer households are much slower at identifying pictures of simple words, such as *dog* or *ball*. By kindergarten, there is a substantial gap between poor and middle-class children in recognizing letters, understanding word sounds, and reading skills more generally. There likewise are substantial differences in math skills (e.g.,

counting, recognizing basic shapes) and in behavioral regulation that enables children to follow classroom rules, pay attention, and adapt their behavior for optimal learning. Because the effects of poverty register so early in children, and because these effects then have long-lasting consequences, there is a compelling argument to intervene early in ways that will reduce these effects and consequences and thereby equalize opportunities.

Early Childhood Education

The rationale for early childhood education, another key safety net program, also is rooted in an equal opportunity logic. Although home visiting programs can reduce income-based cognitive and behavioral differences among children from various socioeconomic groups, sizable gaps do of course still emerge relatively early in childhood. The achievement gap between children from high-income and low-income families, for example, tends to be very large when children enter kindergarten and remains much the same size as children progress through elementary school. The purpose of early childhood education is to take up where home visiting programs left off by providing the early experiences and stimulation that can reduce the size of the gap among children entering kindergarten. This again is an opportunity-equalizing function: It is a matter of ensuring that all children, even those born into poor families, are afforded the same opportunity to realize their capacities by providing them with more nearly equal early training.

Late Interventions

The analogous logic also informs compensatory initiatives targeted to later childhood. There are many such initiatives, including (a) Title I programs that improve opportunities for academic success in low-income schools, (b) dedicated extracurricular and summer-school activities for low-income children, (c) programs for disseminating information about preparing for and applying to college, and (d) financial aid and loans for low-income children attending college or vocational schools. The shared logic behind these programs is that, given that opportunity is bought and sold on the market, those who have less in the way of market capacity have fewer opportunities than those from high-income families. The simple upshot: The complex of institutions that are dubbed the "safety net" are in fact more properly referred to as "opportunity-equalizing" institutions.

Earned Income Tax Credit

The skeptic might suggest that I have cherry-picked those safety net programs that are best understood as operating to equalize opportunity. Are the balance of other safety net programs more properly viewed as a form of charity? Is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), for example, just a handout that expresses the federal government's commitment to help those in need?

The unequivocal answer: No. There is no need to reiterate here the oft-made point that, for households with low earnings, the EITC incentivizes work by varying positively with earnings. This point does not directly speak to the opportunity-equalizing role of the safety net. It is more relevant that the EITC, although typically understood as a demand-side intervention (because it supplements income for low-earnings workers), also is a supply-side program that increases the opportunities available to children born into low-income families. The EITC has impressive

downstream benefits: It reduces the likelihood of low-weight births; it improves the performance of children on cognitive tests; and it ultimately increases college enrollment. When parental income is increased by means of the EITC, children are raised in healthier and less stressful circumstances, which in turn gives them the capacity and opportunity to make human capital investments more nearly on par with children from higher income backgrounds. The EITC is, in short, one of the country's most important opportunity-equalizing institutions.

This is not to suggest that *all* safety net programs are best understood as opportunity equalizing. Rather, my more moderate claim is that one of the main functions of the safety net is to equalize opportunity, a function that typically is overlooked by those who instead seek to position it as a form of charity. When the safety net is viewed as mere charity, it becomes an inessential add-on institution that, whenever possible, should be shrunken. Although a safety net might be unnecessary in the best of all possible worlds, the appropriate time to turn to shrinking it is when its opportunity-equalizing function is no longer needed. The social science evidence is clear that we are very far indeed from living in that type of world.

Conclusion

The safety net is not about treating symptoms, not about providing short-term relief, and certainly not about offering charity. It is mainly about building a training system and economy that provides opportunities for everyone and ensures decent rewards for hard work. To be sure, some safety net programs are appropriately construed as simple charity, but the bulk of the safety net's work entails equalizing opportunities in a world in which they have been commodified and are accordingly bought and sold on the market. The safety net does its equalizing work by allowing children born into poor families to compete on a somewhat fairer footing.

When considering possible reforms to the safety net, the objective should be to better develop its opportunity-equalizing capacities, thus making it an institution to which Americans can even more deeply commit. We too often embrace flavor-of-the-day social programs simply because they happen to have the requisite support. This is surely understandable: After all, only rarely does *any* poverty-reducing program have much support, thus making us loathe to be all that principled when one finally does. The great virtue, however, of a more principled approach is that it lays out our commitments clearly and allows us to build our institutions in defense of them. When our safety net reminds us of our commitment to equal opportunity, it becomes a cherished institution that we hold near and dear, an institution that makes sense to us and that we are especially willing to defend.
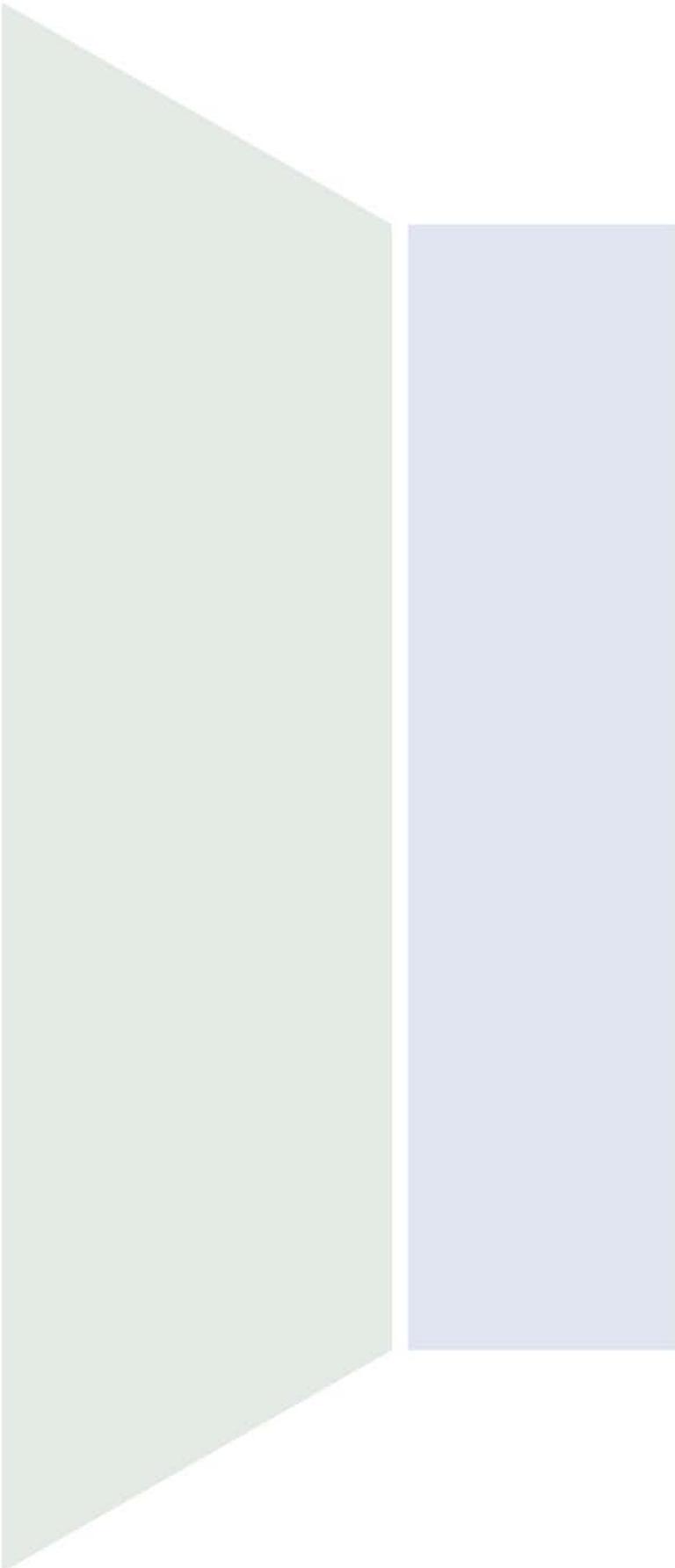
Section 3

How Education Can Open the Doors to Opportunity for All Students

Multicultural Education, School Reform, and Educational Equality

James A. Banks

*Kerry and Linda Killinger Endowed Chair in Diversity Studies and
Director of the Center for Multicultural Education, University of Washington–Seattle*

A major goal of multicultural education is to reform schools, colleges, and universities so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality (Banks & Banks, 2004, 2013). In the United States (Cookson, 2013) as well as worldwide, schools reflect and reproduce racial and social-class stratification within the larger society (Banks, 2009). Inequality within schools is reflected in the curriculum, textbooks, teacher attitudes and expectations, student-teacher interactions, and the languages and the dialects valued, in the school culture.

Important goals of worldwide ethnic revitalization and multicultural movements since the 1960s and the 1970s are to reform schools so that they reflect the cultures of diverse groups of students and to rewrite school history so that it reveals the experiences, struggles, hopes, and dreams of diverse groups and the contributions they have made to nation building. Telling the histories of excluded and marginalized groups challenges the institutionalized myths about dominant and minority groups within the popular culture and the school, college, and university curriculum.

Moving Beyond Content Integration

Curriculum reform was the primary focus when the multicultural education movement first emerged in the United States in the 1960s (Banks, 1996). When multicultural content was integrated into the school, college, and university curriculum, African Americans and other students of color continued to face academic problems. The continuing academic failure of students of color made scholars and researchers realize that integrating multicultural content into the curriculum is very important and needed but is not sufficient for the effective education of students from diverse groups. To increase the academic achievement of students who are marginalized, the curriculum as well as the whole school must be reformed, and multicultural education must be implemented in a broad and comprehensive way. Multicultural education is a reform movement that conceptualizes the school as a social system that consists of many variables that need to be changed simultaneously (Banks, 2015; Brookover, Brady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979).

Scholars and researchers agree that if multicultural education is to be implemented successfully, comprehensive institutional changes must be made in schools, colleges, and universities. The needed changes include those to the curriculum; teaching materials; teaching and learning styles; the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of teachers and administrators; and the goals, norms, and culture of educational institutions (Banks, 2015; Banks & Banks, 2004). However, many school and university practitioners have a limited conceptualization of multicultural education. They view it primarily as curriculum reform that involves changing or restructuring the curriculum to include content about diverse groups. Although content integration within the curriculum is essential, it is not sufficient.

The Dimensions of Multicultural Education

The dimensions of multicultural education must be clearly described, conceptualized, and researched for them to be implemented in ways consistent with theory and research. In this essay, multicultural education is conceptualized as a field that consists of five dimensions, based on my research, observations, and fieldwork over four decades: (1) content integration, (2) the knowledge construction process, (3) prejudice reduction, (4) an equity pedagogy, and (5) empowering school culture and social structure. Each dimension is briefly defined and illustrated (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Dimensions of Multicultural Education

Content Integration

Content integration deals with the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures in their teaching.

Knowledge Construction

Teachers help students understand, investigate, and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed.

Multicultural Education

Equity Pedagogy

An equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social-class groups.

Prejudice Reduction

This dimension focuses on the characteristics of students' racial attitudes and how these attitudes can be modified by teaching methods and materials.

Empowering School Culture and Social Structure

Grouping and labeling practices, sports participation, disproportionality in achievement, and staff-student interactions across ethnic and racial lines are examined to create a school culture that empowers students from diverse racial, ethnic, and gender groups.

The dimensions typology approximates reality but does not describe its total complexity. Like all classification schemas, it provides a way to organize and make sense of complex and disparate data and observations. However, the categories are interrelated and overlapping, not mutually exclusive. The five dimensions are conceptually distinct but highly interrelated.

Content Integration

Content integration describes the extent to which teachers use examples, data, and information from various cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline. In many districts as well as popular writings, multicultural education is viewed only or primarily as content integration. The widespread belief that content integration constitutes the whole of multicultural education might be what causes many teachers of such disciplines as mathematics and science to view multicultural education as appropriate for social studies and language arts teachers but not for them.

More opportunities exist for integrating ethnic and cultural content in some disciplines than in others. In social studies, language arts, and music, for example, opportunities abound for teachers to use ethnic and cultural content to illustrate concepts, themes, and principles. There also are opportunities to integrate multicultural content into mathematics and science, but these opportunities are not as ample as they are in social studies, language arts, and music.

Knowledge Construction

Knowledge construction describes the processes that social, behavioral, and natural scientists use to create knowledge and the ways that implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence how that knowledge is constructed within it (Collins, 2000; Gould, 1996; Harding, 1991). As implemented in a classroom, knowledge construction means that teachers help students understand how knowledge is created and how it is influenced by the racial, ethnic, and social-class positions of individuals and groups.

Students investigate how the cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence how knowledge is constructed within it (Banks, 1996). Students can analyze the knowledge construction process in science by studying how racism has been perpetuated by genetic theories of intelligence, Darwinism, and eugenics. In *The Mismeasure of Man,* Gould (1996) described how scientific racism developed and was influential in the 19th and 20th centuries. Scientific racism continues to have a significant influence on the interpretations of mental ability tests in the United States (Kornhaber, 2012).

The publication of *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), its widespread and enthusiastic public reception, and the social context from which it emerged make a revealing case study of the ways that positionality, class, and biography influence knowledge construction. Herrnstein and Murray argued that low-income groups and African Americans have less intellectual ability than middle-class Whites, and these differences are inherited. Although it evoked a public controversy, *The Bell Curve* was popular in the United States and remained on *The New York Times* bestseller list for 15 weeks and sold a half million copies in the first 18 months after publication. Gould (1994) stated that Herrnstein and Murray's arguments reflected the social context of the times, "a historical moment of unprecedented ungenerosity, when a mood for slashing social programs can be powerfully abetted by an argument that beneficiaries cannot be helped, owing to inborn cognitive limits expressed as low I.Q. scores" (p. 139).

To develop an understanding of the need for social change, a commitment to social participation, and the skills to participate effectively in social action that leads to change, the knowledge that students acquire must have certain characteristics. It must describe events, concepts, and situations from the perspectives of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups within society, including those that are politically and culturally dominant as well as those structurally excluded from full societal participation. Much of school and popular knowledge presents events and situations from the perspectives of the victors rather than the vanquished—and from the perspectives of those who control social, economic, and political institutions in society rather than the victimized and the marginalized (Loewen, 2010).

School and popular knowledge that presents issues, events, and concepts primarily from the perspectives of dominant groups tends to justify the status quo (Collins, 2000; Harding, 1991), rationalizes racial and social-class inequality, and makes students content with the status quo. An important latent function of such knowledge is to convince students that the current social, political, and economic institutions are just, and substantial change within society is neither justified nor required (Baldwin, 1985).

Knowledge reflects the social, historical, political, and economic context in which it is constructed (Banks, 1996; Berger & Luckman, 1966; Mannheim, 1936/1985). It also reflects the experiences, perspectives, visions, values, and biographical journeys of researchers (Banks, 1998, 2006). Such ethnic groups as African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans have been victimized by the mainstream academic knowledge that is institutionalized in U.S. popular culture as well as school, college, and university textbooks.

Scholars of color, along with White colleagues who identify with their communities, have constructed research that accurately reflects their experiences, values, and perspectives (Banks, 2006; Collins, 2000; Harding, 1991). They also have developed epistemological ideas that reveal how mainstream knowledge reinforces dominant power relationships within society and marginalizes groups from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups (Apple, 1993).

Prejudice Reduction

Prejudice reduction describes the lessons and the activities that teachers use to help students develop positive attitudes toward different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. Research indicates that children come to school with many negative attitudes toward and misconceptions about different racial and ethnic groups (Stephan & Vogt, 2004). Research also indicates that lessons, units, and teaching materials that include content about diverse racial and ethnic groups can help students develop positive intergroup attitudes if certain conditions exist in the teaching situation (Stephan & Stephan, 2004), including positive images of racial and ethnic groups in the materials and the consistent and sequential use of multiethnic materials.

Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis provides useful guidelines for helping students develop positive interracial attitudes and actions in contact situations. He stated that contact between groups will improve intergroup relationships when the contact is characterized by four conditions: (1) is based on equal status, (2) uses cooperation rather than competition, (3) is sanctioned by such authorities as teachers and administrators, and (4) contains interpersonal interactions in which students become acquainted as individuals. One way to increase equal

status within classrooms is to use textbooks and other materials that describe the histories, problems, and experiences of diverse groups. Multicultural textbooks and other materials give voice to the histories and the experiences of all students in the classroom and enable them to experience structural inclusion, civic equality, and recognition (Gutmann, 2004).

Since the 1940s, numerous curriculum intervention studies have been conducted to determine the effects of teaching units and lessons, multicultural textbooks and materials, role playing, and other kinds of simulated experiences on the racial attitudes and perceptions of students (Banks, 2006; Trager & Yarrow, 1952). This research indicates that using multicultural textbooks and cooperative teaching strategies enables students from different racial and ethnic groups to interact positively and can help them develop positive racial attitudes and behaviors. These kinds of materials and teaching strategies also can result in students choosing more friends from outside their racial and ethnic groups (Slavin, 2012).

Equity Pedagogy

An equity pedagogy exists when teachers use techniques and methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse groups. It consists of theories, teaching approaches, and interventions that help students who are members of low-status population groups increase their academic achievement (Au, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Equity pedagogy helps close the opportunity gap between high- and low-achieving groups of students (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

An equity pedagogy includes a variety of teaching styles and approaches that are consistent with the wide range of learning styles within various cultural and ethnic groups, is demanding but highly personalized when working with such groups as Native American and Native Alaskan students, and uses cooperative learning techniques in mathematics and science instruction to enhance the academic achievement of students of color (Cohen & Lotan, 2014; Slavin, 2012). Cultural difference theorists and researchers have conceptualized and researched ways to actualize equity pedagogy for students from diverse groups (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lee, 2007).

Cultural difference theorists have described the ways in which the languages (Valdés, Capitelli, & Alvarez, 2011), dialects (Hudley & Mallinson, 2011), learning characteristics (Lee, 2007), and home cultures (Moll & González, 2004) of students of color and students from low-income families can be used to motivate them to learn and enrich instruction for them and other students. Since the 1970s, researchers and theorists have conducted a series of pioneering studies that document the ways in which schools can increase the academic achievement of diverse groups by implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies that build on and reflect the home and community cultures of students (Au, 2011; Heath, 2012; Lee, 2007).

**Empowering School Culture and Social Structure**

Empowering school culture and social structure describes the process of restructuring a school's culture and the organization so that students from diverse groups will experience educational equality, cultural empowerment, and recognition (Valenzuela, 1999). Creating an empowering school culture for students of color and students from low-income families involves restructuring the culture and the organization of the school.

Among the variables that must be examined to create a school culture that empowers students from diverse groups are grouping practices (Oakes, 2005), labeling practices, the social climate of the school, and staff expectations for student achievement (Brookover et al., 1979). Reform aimed at creating an empowering school culture focuses on institutionalized factors of the school culture and the environment that must be reformed to increase the academic achievement and emotional growth of students from diverse groups.

Grouping and labeling practices, sports participation, disproportionality in achievement, disproportionality in enrollment in gifted and special education programs, and student-staff interactions across ethnic and racial lines are important variables that must be examined to create a school culture that empowers students from diverse groups (Cookson, 2013). Educators and policymakers need to conceptualize the school as a social system in which all the major variables are closely interrelated in order to implement an empowering school culture and social structure. Conceptualizing the school as a social system requires educators to formulate and initiate a change strategy that reforms the total school environment. The major school variables that must be reformed are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The Total School Environment
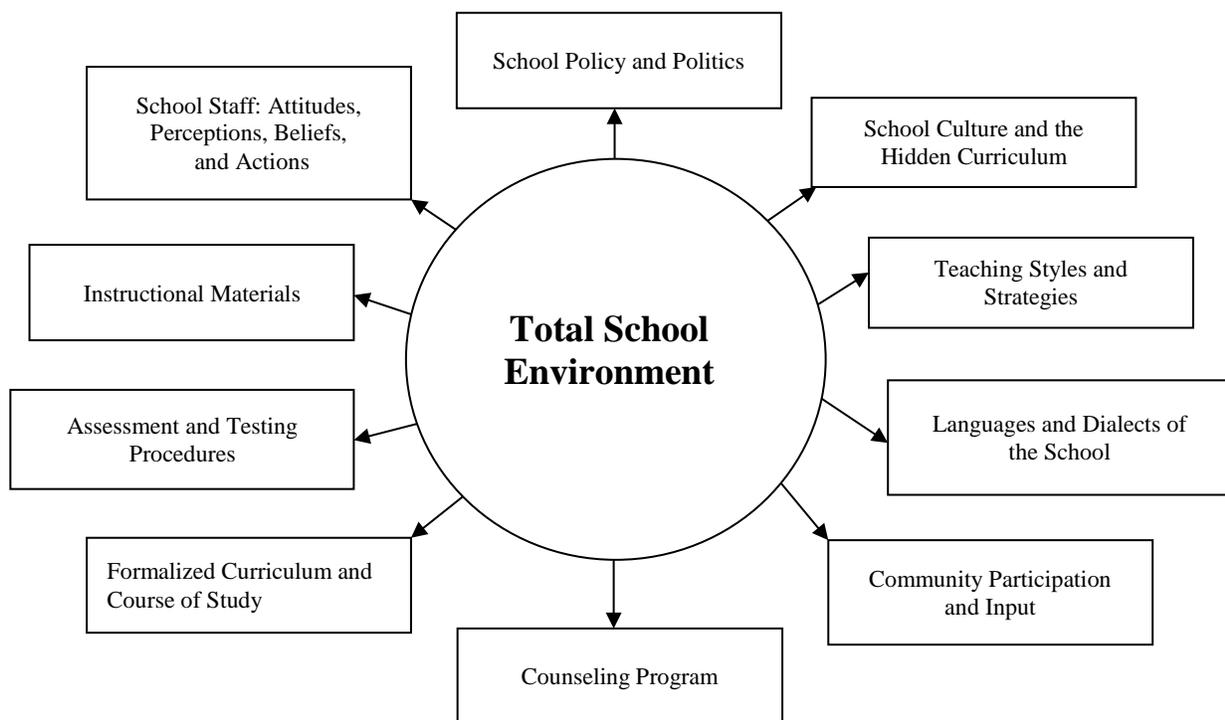
Copyright © 2014 by James A. Banks. Reprinted with permission

Reforming any one of the variables in Figure 2, such as the formalized curriculum or curricular materials, is necessary but not sufficient. Multicultural and sensitive teaching materials are ineffective in the hands of teachers who have negative attitudes toward different racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups. Such teachers are unlikely to use multicultural materials or may use them in a harmful way. Teachers and other school staff members need to gain knowledge about diverse groups as well as democratic attitudes and values to successfully implement multicultural education and actualize educational equality.

The components of a school that must be reformed to implement multicultural education include its power relationships, the verbal interactions between teachers and students, the culture of the school, the curriculum, extracurricular activities, attitudes toward minority languages, the testing program (Kornhaber, 2012), and grouping practices (Oakes, 2005). The institutional norms of the school—including its social structure, beliefs, values, and goals—also must be transformed and reconstructed.

Summary

Multicultural education is an idea that all students—regardless of their race, culture, social class, or language—experience educational equality in schools. Some students, because of their racial, ethnic, cultural, or social-class characteristics, have a better chance at succeeding in schools as they are currently structured than students from other groups. Multicultural education also is a reform movement that is designed to bring about school transformation so that students from diverse groups will have an equal chance to experience school success. Multicultural theorists and researchers view the school as a social system that consists of highly interrelated parts and variables (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billing, 2009). Therefore, to transform a school to bring about educational equality, all its major components must be substantially changed. A focus on any one variable in the school—such as the formalized curriculum—will not implement multicultural education and promote educational equality. However, the integration of the curriculum with multicultural content is a logical place to begin the process of school reform.

Multicultural education is a continuing process because the idealized goals it tries to actualize—such as educational equality and the eradication of all forms of racism and discrimination—can never be fully achieved in human society. Multicultural education—which was born during the social protests of the 1960s and 1970s—is an international and worldwide movement (Banks, 2009, 2012) that aims to help students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to become effective citizens who promote social justice within their local communities, their nation-states, and the global community.

References

Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice.* Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Apple, M. W. (1993). *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Au, K. H. (2011). *Literacy achievement and diversity: Keys to success for students, teachers, and schools.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Baldwin, J. (1985). A talk to teachers. In *The price of the ticket: Collected nonfiction 1948–1985* (pp. 325–332). New York, NY: St. Martin's.

Banks, J. A. (1991). The dimensions of multicultural education. *Multicultural Leader, 4,* 5–6.

Banks, J. A. (Ed.). (1996). *Multicultural education, transformative knowledge, and action: Historical and contemporary perspectives.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Banks, J. A. (1998). The lives and values of researchers: Implications for educating citizens in a multicultural society. *Educational Researcher, 27*(7), 4–17.

Banks, J. A. (2004). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed., pp. 3–29). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Banks, J. A. (2006). Improving race relations in schools: From theory to practice. *Journal of Social Issues, 62*(3), 607–614.

Banks, J. A. (Ed.). (2009). *The Routledge international companion to multicultural education.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Banks, J. A. (Ed.). (2012). *Encyclopedia of diversity in education.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Banks, J. A. (2015). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and teaching* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (Eds.). (2004). *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (Eds.) (2013). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (8th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Berger, P. L., & Luckman, T. (1966). *The social construction of knowledge: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Brookover, W. B., Beady, C., Flood, P., Schweitzer, J., & Wisenbaker, J. (1979). *School social systems and student achievement: Schools can make a difference.* New York, NY: Praeger.

Cohen, E. G., & Lotan, R. A. (2014). *Designing groupwork: Strategies for the heterogeneous classroom* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Cookson, P. W., Jr. (2013). *Class rules: Exposing inequality in American high schools.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Gould, S. J. (1994). Curveball. *The New Yorker, 70*(38), 139–149.

Gould, S. J. (1996). *The mismeasure of man* (Rev. & updated ed.). New York, NY: Norton.

Gutmann, A. (2004). Unity and diversity in democratic multicultural education: Creative and destructive tensions. In J. A. Banks (Ed.), *Diversity and citizenship education: Global perspectives* (pp. 71–96). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Harding, S. (1991). *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Heath, S. B. (2012). *Words at work and play: Three decades in family and community.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Herrnstein, R. J., & Murray, C. (1994). *The bell curve: Intelligence and class structure in American life.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Hudley, A. H. C., & Mallinson, C. (2011). *Understanding language variation in U.S. schools.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Kornhaber, M. L. (2012). Standardized testing and standards. In J. A. Banks (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of diversity in education* (Vol. 4, pp. 2073–2076). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher, 35*(7), 3–12.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lee, C. D. (2007). *Culture, literacy, and learning: Taking bloom in the midst of the whirlwind.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Loewen, J. W. (2010). *Teaching what really happened: How to avoid the tyranny of textbooks and get students excited about doing history.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Mannheim, K. (1985). *Ideology and utopia: An introduction to the sociology of knowledge.* San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace. (Original work published in 1936)

Moll, L., & González, N. (2004). Engaging life: A funds-of-knowledge approach to multicultural education. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed., pp. 699–715). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Oakes, J. (2005). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality* (2nd ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Slavin, R. E. (2012). Cooperative learning. In J. A. Banks (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of diversity in education* (Vol. 1, pp. 453–458). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stephan, W. G., & Stephan, C. W. (2004). Intergroup relations in multicultural education programs. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed., pp. 782–798). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Stephan, W. G., & Vogt, W. P. (Eds.). (2004). *Education programs for improving intergroup relations: Theory, research and practice.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Trager, H. G., & Yarrow, M. R. (1952). *They learn what they live: Prejudice in young children.* New York, NY: Harper.

Valdés, G., Capitelli, S., & Alvarez, L. (2011). *Latino children learning English: Steps in the journey.* New York. NY: Teachers College Press.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.–Mexican youth and the politics of caring.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Supporting Sustainable Improvement in School Systems: Capacity Building for Equity and Excellence

Sheryl Petty

Consultant in Education, Equity and Systems Change, and Formerly Principal Associate at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island

Introduction

Schools and school systems throughout the United States are striving to envision, implement, and sustain transformative changes that will benefit all students. We all have a litany of requirements for school systems: providing high-quality instruction, equitably distributing resources to ensure that robust systems of supports meet students' social and emotional needs and help them tap their emotional as well as academic intelligence, and authentically partnering with families and communities to envision and evaluate new directions. We also expect that such systems will draw on the strengths and passions of all students, honor their cultural histories, and expand their understanding of and exposure to the world as they become community members who contribute to our collective well-being—all while using meaningful, accessible data that provide districts, staff, students, families, and community members with the information they need to jointly reflect, understand, align, and course-correct their efforts for the benefit of all.

Equity-centered capacity building (ECCB) provides a lens, a set of skills, and specific strategies that support school systems and communities as they move along the continuum of transformative and sustainable improvement. In addition to more commonly understood capacity-building strategies that focus on improving the quality of teaching, strengthening leadership capacity, ensuring effective data systems, and other areas, equity-centered approaches also directly address issues of power, race, socioeconomics, gender, and other dynamics of difference, plus historical community, cultural, and political tensions as they relate to the healthy functioning of classrooms, schools, and school systems. Prevalent market-based reform approaches are based on a set of design principles echoed by highly aligned, influential individuals and organizations that are driving the national discourse about the purposes of and the best strategies for improving education. Although these approaches have powerful and important aspects, they too often lack focus on the social, cultural, and political dimensions of deep and sustainable, systemwide change.[1]

When done skillfully, ECCB also builds the courage, relationships, and the muscle of administrators, teachers, students, boards, and community members to stay focused on their dreams and goals—helping all students thrive, improving schools and school systems, and tackling the most daunting challenges.

---

[1] See, for example, Honig (2013); Knudson, Shaumbaugh, and O'Day (2011); McGuire (2014); Simmons and Petty (2013); and Zavadsky (2013).

What Is Equity-Centered Capacity Building?

At its heart, ECCB promotes joint inquiry and action at all levels of school systems (local, state, regional, and national) with representative stakeholders (including students and families),using robust, well-rounded data that are jointly generated and analyzed, grounded in local contexts and experience, and a research and theoretical base. ECCB includes tools and processes for reflection, analysis, deliberation, the development of principles to ground the work, solution generation and locally sensitive strategy development, leader identification, indicators of impact and success, and implementation, along with the development of well-designed and facilitated structures for cycles of reflection and improvement.[2]

Several elements connect ECCB approaches and distinguish them from more commonly understood capacity-building practices:

- The inclusion of and extension beyond purely structural and technical approaches to capacity building

- A systematic focus on multiple levels of experience in educational systems (bottom-up combined with top-down)

- The central place of the experience of local educators, students, and communities in defining, implementing, and refining strategies

- An intentional focus on the nature and the impact of social, cultural, and political dimensions (e.g., race, class, gender, power, and history) in how systemic change processes are undertaken and evaluated at local, state, and national levels

Vision for Education

ECCB approaches are designed to achieve a shared
vision and purpose for effective, powerful education systems and help promote thriving, equitable communities. From an ECCB perspective, U.S. education is intended to serve the ends

---

What Does Equity-Centered Capacity Building Look Like?

The National Urban Alliance for Effective Education

A Midwest district hired the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA), based in Syosset, New York. to support the district in realizing its mission to inspire all learners to develop their potential and contribute to their communities, as well as address massive demographic changes happening in the district with the influx of more African, African American, and other cultural groups of students.

NUA's work with the district included seminars with the board of education on cognitive development, neuroscience, and the impact of culture and race on learning; leadership development for administrators and coaches; teacher coaching and academies; and implementation of the NUA *Student Voices* process. The district was clear that the superintendent needed support to achieve a unified vision, break down barriers, and replace inequitable practices and structures with those that elicit belief in the capacity of all students for high intellectual performance in self-directed learning, self-actualization, and contribution to society.

---

[2] See, for example, Kozleski and Artiles (2012), the National Institute for Urban School Improvement (2006), and the Panasonic Foundation (2013).

of participatory democracy and help every person reach his or her full potential, including robust participation in civic life and meaningful work. Education for these ends should build vibrant communities of knowledgeable, compassionate, and engaged community members who thrive, collectively reflect on and make decisions, and contribute to the well-being of our diverse communities, school systems, and world.

Preparing youth and adults to prosper and contribute to our collective well-being (including being college and career ready) requires a broad set of skills and competencies: academic, social and emotional, cultural, linguistic, and political. Thus prepared, Americans can be successful participants in a thriving economy and also lead meaningful and dignified lives, sharing strengths and assets in support of communities and society.

For these reasons, a set of design principles undergirds this work. Implemented with depth and shared understanding, they become the "litmus test" for understanding how on-target, limited, or potentially harmful particular systems practices, capacity-building approaches, funding approaches, and policy directions are for students, educators, and communities that are aiming toward this vision. Each design principle has specific operational implications at every level of a school system—from classrooms, schools, district central offices, and charter management organization headquarters to city, state, and federal government. These design principles include:

- Ongoing commitment to self-reflection, humility, dialogue, and growth

- A strengths-based belief and investment in children, youth, and adult learning and growth

- Systematic attention to race, class, power, and diversity and their impact on policies, practices, and patterns at local, state, and federal levels

- Communities, parents, and youth as essential partners

- Demonstrated commitment to equitable and adequate distribution and use of resources in all opportunity-to-learn areas

- Focus on strategic change, system capacity building, and the use of a wide range of well-balanced, meaningful data

- A comprehensive vision for community revitalization and youth well-being

Social, Cultural, and Political Dimensions of Capacity Building and Systems Change: Inseparable From Structural and Technical Approaches

Social, cultural, and political approaches[3] are often absent, inexplicit, buried, disconnected, or underarticulated and understrategized in the many structural and technical approaches to reform and the implementation of education change strategies nationally.[4] In contrast, ECCB approaches aim to bridge apparent gaps in understanding and practice in the field and offer expanded approaches to practice, capacity building, and sustainable systems change.[5] The approaches

---

[3] The use of these terms—structural, technical, social, cultural, and political—was informed by Kozleski and Artiles (in press); the work of Jeannie Oakes; the Transforming Education Systems Alliance; and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

[4] See, for example, Honig (2013); Marzano, Waters, McNulty (2005); and Marzano and Waters (2006).

[5] See, for example, Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2002); Gazmuri, Petty, and Porter (2010); Jackson (2011); Kozleski and Artiles (2012); Petty (2010); Scott (n.d.); and Trumbull and Pacheco (2005).

spelled out here form a system and have leadership and governance dimensions rooted in schools and school systems. For that reason, they all must be strategically advanced in tandem to yield lasting systems strength and transformation.

Examples of Structural and Technical Approaches

- Curriculum development and alignment with standards, articulated vertically and horizontally

- Differentiated, high-quality instruction, including personalization, group work, and project-based work

- Well-articulated human resource, supportive accountability, and systems for ongoing, job-embedded, and collaborative professional learning and growth

- Performance and portfolio-based authentic data use and assessment systems, including collecting and using expanded data sets on social, cultural, and political dimensions

- Opportunity-to-learn indicators, including indicators that focus on quantitative outcomes as well as qualitative approaches in areas such as culturally responsive practices in student placement; human, fiscal, and material resource distribution; discipline; attendance; the use of time for collaboration, reflection, and student learning; graduation; English language learners; and special education

- The structural arrangements in which the previous approaches occur (e.g., one-on-one and team reflection, development, and support structures; the use of time and scheduling at school and systemwide levels; meeting frequency, format, and strategic versus tactical focus) and the degree to which these structures promote or constrain well-informed, collaborative, reflective thought and improved action

- Communication systems and structures within schools, across schools, and between schools and community

Examples of Social, Cultural, and Political Approaches

ECCB takes into account organizational culture, context and history, politics, cultural responsiveness, and the analysis of structural inequity practices and patterns as they relate to institutional and system functioning. These elements must be systematically analyzed, planned for, and addressed:

- Internal reflection on values, beliefs, and expectations of students, adults, families, and communities

- Collaboration structures and systematic joint reflection on the context and the structures within which educators are practicing, students are learning, and communities are living—plus attention to the people at the table in these discussions

- Personal and group shared accountability

- The development of constructive relationships and authentic engagement between staff, faculty, students, parents and family, boards, unions, and the community

- Culturally responsive and multilingual curricula, instruction, and assessment

- Political context and history

- Social and emotional learning and support for and the creation of nurturing environments for adults and youth

- Cultural competence in staff, faculty, parent, family, and community relations

- Focus on culturally responsive practices and attention to allocating high-quality resources to students with the greatest needs in all the opportunity-to-learn areas noted previously

- Partnership with students, families, community, and school or district staff in analyzing, visioning, and evaluating the approaches to and the impact of school efforts

---

What Does Equity-Centered Capacity-Building Look Like?

The National Equity Project

The National Equity Project (NEP), based in Oakland, California, develops leaders who use an equity lens for improving schools, districts, and other educational organizations to ensure rigorous learning for all students in their care. A recent district partnership in the San Francisco Bay area involved the facilitation of a districtwide listening campaign as a way to surface and access a wide range of stories, experiences, views, opinions, and perspectives on equity, diversity, and cultural competence across the school system. The campaign led to an audit of the achievement of the district's ELL students, a professional development series for the administrative cabinet and school equity teams, and executive coaching for district leadership.

In schools, NEP provided support to school administrators, including leadership and team coaching, along with an analysis of structures, policies, and procedures that supported or inhibited equity. This work included coaching support to teachers in inquiry teams as they reshaped their practices to disrupt inequitable instruction and other inequitable classroom practices, particularly to accelerate learning for students below grade level.

Domains of Equity-Centered Capacity Building

ECCB supports school systems in addressing the structural, technical, social, cultural, and political dimensions of functioning and sustainable change at the following levels:[6]

Classrooms and School Sites

- Teacher and leader quality

- Culturally responsive curricula

- Differentiated instruction

- Portfolio, performance-based, and authentic assessments to gauge student "success" in broader, deeper ways

- Safety

- Nurturing

- Personalization

- Equitably distributed materials and facilities

- Authentic engagement with families and communities

- Staff and student voice

- Reflection and ongoing assessment of practices and impact

School Systems (districts, local education agencies, charter management organizations, and online systems)

- Courageous and strategic equity-driven leadership

- Equitable distribution and use of educators, financial resources, and supports across schools

- Supported collaboration and cycles of reflection, learning, and improvement across schools

Communities

- Public will to support the community's schools

- Resources for a wide variety of community-based learning opportunities

- Deep expertise in local culture and needs

- Active partnership in decision making about their neighborhood schools

---

[6] See, for example, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities, and University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (2014); Del Razo, Saunders, Renée, López, and Ullucci (2014); and National Institute for Urban School Improvement (2006).

States

- Equitable distribution and use of financial and other resources and supports across school systems

- Collaborative monitoring and support

- Coordination, joint reflection, and collaboration with other states to ensure development of a well-educated populace

Connections to Key Issue Areas in the Field

ECCB speaks to the major focal points; challenges education practice, policymaking, and funding; and also can deepen the field's understanding of these perspectives and efforts toward sustainable change. But other areas outside the dominant discourse in these three spheres also are high-leverage areas for deep, sustainable change toward the vision and design principles set forth previously:

- Teacher and administrator quality (preparation, supports, development, and evaluation) and the nature of instructional practices

- Common Core State Standards

- School and school system leadership and governance

- The nature of learning and inquiry (for youth and adults)

- Cultural expectations and belief in students

- Student voice

- Charters and vouchers

- Authentic parent, family, and community engagement

- School transformation and school closing

- School funding and system finance

- Authentic assessment approaches

- College readiness

- Flexibility waivers for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), renewals, and reauthorization

ECCB also offers a lens on the relationships among areas in the field that are currently pursued as separate strands, thus fragmenting research and practice. Integral to each another and interdependent lenses for understanding high-quality practices, some that are combined in ECCB approaches with school systems and states include:

- Positive youth development approaches, social and emotional learning, the Common Core, and culturally responsive instructional practices

- Response to intervention, positive behavioral interventions and supports, restorative justice, and culturally responsive instructional practices

- Collective impact; complexity theory; intersectionality; and the social, cultural, and political dimensions of systems change that explicitly address and offer change-management strategies related to race, class, power, and historical education system and community tensions

Connection to Citywide Community-Building Efforts

Citywide efforts—including, for example, some of the Say Yes to Education sites, Promise Neighborhoods, the Strive Partnership, what the Annenberg Institute for School Reform calls *smart education systems*,[7] and some community school approaches—provide a broad network and productive ecology of opportunities and supports to young people inside and outside school. They also revitalize communities and provide the political, social, and moral capital required to advance change and counter the forces that often derail and delay essential changes in policy and practice. Such citywide, "cradle-to-career" smart education systems:

- Form multiple, cross-sector partnerships.

- Focus on a broad set of academic and developmental outcomes.

- Include strategies that address power differentials.

- Revolve around community and family.

- Foster shared accountability.

These efforts create infrastructure for long-term, ongoing reflection, dialogue, planning, goal setting, metrics development, data sharing, and the assessment of impact among the range of entities supporting the positive development of youth—including their physical and mental health, academic success, social and emotional health, and financial well-being. Partnering entities in citywide efforts include school systems and districts, students and families, physical and mental health providers, social service agencies, city and county government, youth development organizations, community organizing groups, higher education institutions, nonprofit organizations, local education funds, the business community, faith-based institutions, legal institutions (including juvenile justice), and others.

> **What Does Equity-Centered Capacity Building Look Like?**
>
> **The Annenberg Institute for School Reform**
>
> An East Coast district hired the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (based in Providence, Rhode Island) to design a process where the internal and external district community could reflect together on its history, strengths, and challenges and collectively devise strategic directions for the its future.
>
> One recommendation that emerged was for the district to participate in creating a citywide, community-building process to build and strengthen relationships between various youth-serving organizations in the community, heal historic tensions among racial and income groups, and create joint strategies to realize a shared vision for the well-being of all children and youth in the city.

The infrastructure supporting long-term reflection, planning, improvement, and shared accountability requires sharing, aggregating, and generating meaningful data and reports across disparate agencies, technology structures, funding structures, and reporting systems. This

---

[7] See Simmons (n.d.).

strategy is in addition to the support needed for well-structured, robust, complex, and often emotionally charged conversations about what the data indicate about the policies, practices, and changes needed. ECCB approaches are ideal for supporting such efforts.

From a capacity-building perspective, the minimum threshold of readiness to successfully build and sustain a smart education system may be different for districts and networks of schools in varied local and state contexts. Thus, practitioners, communities, capacity builders, and researchers would be wise to jointly find out:

- Which districts and networks of schools and communities are successful in implementing and sustaining which aspects of smart education systems

- What prerequisite capacities and conditions exist

- Which capacities and supportive conditions were built during smart education system development and how they were built

- How choices and decisions were made and implemented, with what obstacles and successes, as the smart education system evolved

Conclusion

As the education field deepens its understanding of how to implement reform approaches that center on both equity and excellence, we will have better opportunities to support sustainable transformation in U.S. school systems. Joint reflection and dialogue forums, along with disseminating the stories, research, and lessons of how such efforts have been implemented, can greatly help school systems, educators, and other change agents learn from one another and deepen their practices. Such ongoing sharing and learning also can support policymakers and funders as they develop approaches more comprehensive approaches to help every student and all communities thrive.

References

Annenberg Institute for School Reform. (2002). *Central office review for results and equity.* Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Retrieved from http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/product/283/files/CORRE.pdf

Annenberg Institute for School Reform, John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities, & University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. (2014). *Beyond college eligibility: A new framework for promoting college readiness* (College Readiness Indicator Systems Resource Series). Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved from http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/FrameworkNarrative.CRIS_.pdf

Del Razo, J. L., Saunders, M., Renée, M., López, R. M., & Ullucci, K. (2014). *Leveraging time for equity: Indicators to measure more and better learning time.* Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Retrieved from http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/leveragingtimeforschoolequity.pdf

Gazmuri, S. K., Petty, S., & Porter, E. (2010). *Equity-driven systems change (ESC) model: A toolkit for improving instructional practice and student outcomes.* Emeryville, CA: California Tomorrow. Retrieved from http://www.californiatomorrow.org/media/ESC-Toolkit.pdf

Honig, M. I. (2013). *From tinkering to transformation: Strengthening school district central office performance.* Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute. Retrieved from http://www.aei.org/outlook/education/k-12/system-reform/from-tinkering-to-transformation-strengthening-school-district-central-office-performance/

Knudson, J., Shaumbaugh, L., & O'Day, J. (2011). *Beyond the school: Exploring a systemic approach to school turnaround* (Policy and Practice Brief). San Mateo, CA: California Collaborative for District Reform. Retrieved from http://cacollaborative.org/sites/default/files/CA_Collaborative_School_Turnaround_0.pdf

Kozleski, E. B., & Artiles, A. J. (2012). *Technical assistance as inquiry: Using activity theory methods to engage equity in educational practice communities.* Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/1394323/Kozleski_E._B._and_Artiles_A._J._2012_._Technical_assistance_as_inquiry_Using_activity_theory_methods_to_engage_equity_in_educational_practice_communities

Kozleski, E. B., & Artiles, A. J. (in press). *Mediating systemic change in educational systems through socio-cultural methods.* In P. Smeyers, K. U. Leuven, D. Bridges, N. Burbules, & M. Griffiths (Eds.), *International handbook of interpretation in educational research methods.* New York, NY: Springer.

Jackson, Y. (2011). *The pedagogy of confidence: Inspiring high intellectual performance in urban schools.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Marzano, R., & Waters, T. (2006). *School district leadership that works: The effect of the superintendent on student achievement.* Denver, CO: McREL International.

McGuire, K. (2014, May 19). Time to put poverty back on the education reform agenda. *Philanthropy News Digest*. Retrieved from http://philanthropynewsdigest.org/commentary-and-opinion/time-to-put-poverty-back-on-the-education-reform-agenda

National Institute for Urban School Improvement. (2006). *Systemic change framework: Rubrics assessment handbook: Rubrics for urban schools: Assessing education for all.* Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, Mary Lou Fulton College of Education, National Institute for Urban School Improvement. Retrieved from http://www.urbanschools.org/rubrics/assessment_handbook.pdf?v_document_name=Assessment%20Handbook

Panasonic Foundation. (2013). Introducing the systemwide equity framework and assessment tool (SEFAT). *Strategies, 6*(1), 13–14. Retrieved from http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Resources/Other_Resources/Strategies-Fall-2013.pdf

Petty, S. (2010). *The new frontier: An integrated framework for equity & transformative improvement in education.* Emeryville, CA: California Tomorrow. Retrieved from http://www.californiatomorrow.org/media/The-New-Frontier.pdf

Scott, B. (n.d.). *Six goals of education equity.* San Antonio, TX: Intercultural Development Research Association. Retrieved from http://www.idra.org/images/stories/Six_Goals_of_Education_Equity_Bilingual_2011.pdf

Simmons, W. (n.d.). *Smart education systems: Community-centered school reform.* Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Retrieved from http://annenberginstitute.org/about/smart-education-systems

Simmons, W., & Petty, S. (2013). Learning from the past, looking toward the future: The next four years of federal education policy. *Voices in Urban Education.* Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Retrieved from http://vue.annenberginstitute.org/issues/36/learning-past-looking

Trumbull, E., & Pacheco, M. (2005). *Leading with diversity: Cultural competencies for teacher preparation and professional development.* Providence, RI: The Education Alliance at Brown University. Retrieved from http://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/sites/brown.edu.academics.education-alliance/files/publications/lwd_entire.pdf

Zavadsky, H. (2013). *Scaling turnaround: A district-improvement approach.* Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute. Retrieved from http://www.aei.org/outlook/education/k-12/system-reform/scaling-turnaround-a-district-improvement-approach/

Detracking: A Promising Strategy to Increase Social Mobility for Underserved Youth

Hugh Mehan

Professor Emeritus, Sociology and Education, University of California–San Diego

Students of color from low-income backgrounds do not have the same chances as their middle-income white contemporaries to achieve significant upward mobility. No matter which measure is employed—chronic absenteeism, grade point average, high school completion, test scores, college enrollment, college completion—students from well-to-do neighborhoods outperform their contemporaries from low-income neighborhoods.

In this paper, I discuss *detracking*—the educational practice of eliminating ability groupings and, instead, offering all students a rigorous course of study supported by academic and social supports (or "scaffolds"). A significant institutional arrangement, detracking holds the promise of increasing upward social mobility for low-income students of color.

The Harmful Effects of Tracking

Historically, educators in the United States have responded to differences among individuals and groups by separating students and exposing them to different curricula through the practice of tracking. Tracking starts as early as elementary school in the form of the separation of children into high and low "ability groups." In high school, students often are segregated into "college prep," "general," and "vocational ed" tracks.

The curriculum in low-ability groups and low-track classes is reduced in scope, content, and pace relative to high-ability groups and high-track classes. For instance, students placed in academic tracks (with the expectation that they will attend college), typically receive instruction that is text-based and demands written and verbal displays of knowledge. In contrast, students placed in less demanding "low track" or "vocational ed" courses receive watered down and slower paced instruction that aims them toward the world of work after high school.

Tracking has significant negative consequences. Research shows it to be biased and inequitable (Burris, 2014; Cicourel & Mehan, 1983; Lucas, 1999; Oakes, 2005). The distribution of students to college-prep, general, and vocational education tracks often is disproportionately related to ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Children from low-income or one-parent households, or from families with an unemployed worker, or from linguistic- and ethnic-minority groups, are more likely to be assigned to general or vocational education tracks. Students from middle- and upper-income families, however, are more likely to be assigned to college-prep tracks. Furthermore, low-income students of color are consistently overrepresented in special education programs and continuation schools (alternative schools designed for students at risk of not graduating on time), and they are underrepresented in programs for the "gifted and talented."

Perhaps the most harmful feature of tracking is that it can become a caste system: Once students are placed into low-ability groups, they get stuck there and are seldom promoted to high-ability groups. Such placement in vocational and nonacademic classes can trap ethnic- and linguistic-

minority students, despite their achievements in school. Tracking has thus distorted Horace Mann's vision for the "common school"—an institution that is intended to educate students from all sectors of society: rich and poor students, children of new immigrants, and children of established families.

The Benefits of Detracking

Recognizing that tracked schools are both inequitable and ineffective, educators have been exploring alternatives to tracking practices since the 1980s. Detracking—the educational strategy of providing a single course of rigorous instruction supported by an extensive regimen of academic and social supports (or "scaffolds") holds out the promise for increasing the possibility of upward social mobility for low-income students of color.

The guiding principles of detracked schools are derived from current thinking about cognitive development and the social organization of schooling. Research suggests that all normally functioning students have the capacity to complete a rigorous course of study in high school— one that prepares them for college—provided that the features of a college-going culture of learning are installed (Cicourel & Mehan, 1983; Mehan, 2012; Oakes, 2005).

Instructional models of detracking (Alvarez & Mehan, 2006; Burris, 2014; Mehan, 2012; Oakes, Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997; Rubin, 2006) deliberately reverse the conventional time-curriculum equation. The higher the students' academic performance, the fewer scaffolds needed; likewise, the greater the students' academic needs, the more academic and social supports provided.

Detracking is not merely a technical or structural change in the organization of schooling. It involves a cultural change in educators' beliefs, attitudes, and values as well as changes in the curriculum and the organization of instruction. In a word, it requires the formation and maintenance of a college-going school culture. A *college-going school culture* is a "conditio[n] that students in educationally disadvantaged communities require for learning and successful college preparation" (Oakes, 2003, p. 1). It develops when "teachers, administrators, and students expect students to have all the experiences they need for high achievement and college preparation…. Students believe that college is for *them* and is not reserved for the exceptional few who triumph over adversity to rise above all others" (Oakes, 2003, p. 3).

A college-going school culture includes a shared purpose shown through rituals, traditions, values, symbols, artifacts, and relationships that characterize a school's personality. A school culture is important because it "shapes the way students, teachers, and administrators think, feel, and act" (Deal & Peterson, 2002, p. 9). A professional dress code for teachers and students, motivational signs that encourage students to think continuously about going to college, and rigorous academic standards are some of the symbols that focus students' attention on preparing for college. The construction of a college-going school culture, enhanced by a shift from tracked to detracked classes, holds the potential to provide all students with access to a full range of postsecondary options and a place on the path of upward mobility.

Successful Detracking Models

Five schools in California provide successful models of detracking: The Preuss School, Gompers Preparatory Academy, UCLA Community School, California College Preparatory Academy, and West Sacramento Early College Preparatory Charter School.

The Preuss School

The Preuss School, located on the University of California–San Diego (UCSD) campus, is a prime example of a successful detracked school. Preuss provides intensive college preparation for low-income students exclusively in Grades 6–12. These students are from impoverished neighborhoods that are unsafe, are gang infested, and offer far too few economic opportunities. Every student is enrolled in a college-prep course of study.

Preuss educators have instituted a portfolio of academic and social supports to assist students in meeting the challenges of the rigorous curriculum required for entering four-year colleges and universities. Most notably, the school extends its year by 18 days, which gives teachers more time to instill a college-going school culture and gives students more time to meet the academic demands of college-prep courses. In addition, UCSD students serve as tutors before school, in class, after school, and on Saturdays.

Preuss has installed an advisory period into the school day. Advisory teachers serve as advocates and counselors for the same group of students throughout their seven years at the school. This arrangement enables students and teachers to develop trusting relationships (Valenzuela, 1999) and ensures that student achievement is monitored closely. In addition to connecting with students during the advisory period, advisory teachers observe their students in classes, communicate with parents, and conduct personal conferences. Also, counselors, teachers, and staff address the complexities facing students who attend this academically demanding school.

Preuss is chartered by UCSD through the San Diego Unified School District. Its governing board includes UCSD faculty, educators, and community members. Funding is sustained by per capita student allocations from the state and an active fundraising campaign. Sustained faculty research through the Center for Research on Educational Equity, Access, and Teaching Excellence (CREATE) examines and disseminates reports on the school's success (e.g., McClure, Strick, Jacob-Almeida, & Reicher, 2005; Mehan, 2012; Strick, 2012). Preuss has consistently been ranked among the top public secondary schools in California and in the United States by *U.S. News & World Report* (2014). Since its first graduating class in 2004, 82 percent of Preuss graduates have enrolled at a variety of four-year colleges.

Gompers Preparatory Academy

Another "university-assisted school" also offers a detracked curriculum. Gompers Preparatory Academy in southeastern San Diego began as a conventional urban, secondary school called Gompers Secondary School, which had operated for more than 50 years in a community with a high crime rate and a lengthy history of gang-related violence. In 2004, the school was required to restructure because it had been unable to meet its No Child Left Behind (NCLB) performance targets for six consecutive years.

Parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders (including representatives from the San Diego Chicano Federation, the United Front, the San Diego Organizing Project, UCSD, and the San Diego Urban League) formed a working group to consider the options approved by NCLB for restructuring. The working group chose to form an independent 501(c)(3) charter school in partnership with UCSD. Gompers Preparatory Academy educators instituted a restructuring and reculturing plan that included detracking. As a result, Gompers' college-prep curriculum is supported by a range of academic and social supports, including a longer school day and school week (e.g., a Saturday Academy); uniforms for all students; a comprehensive teacher professional development plan (including on-the-job training and an intensive "Academic and Culture Camp," held before school opens each year, in which teachers are expected to develop a common way of organizing instruction, handling student infractions of school rules, and encouraging student excellence); research, evaluation, and governance expertise; and college-student tutors from UCSD, who provide assistance in classrooms.

In the years since the school greeted its first cohort of sixth through eighth graders in 2005, truancy, suspension, and expulsion rates have dropped, while attendance rates, grade point averages, and test scores have improved. Of the 254 students who have graduated since 2011, 104 (41 percent) have enrolled in four-year colleges; the other 59 percent have enrolled in community colleges.

UCLA Community School

The University of California–Los Angeles (UCLA), the Los Angeles Unified School District, United Teachers Los Angeles, and a coalition of community-based organizations opened the UCLA Community School (UCLA-CS) in the central Los Angeles neighborhood of Pico Union/Korea town in 2009. UCLA-CS opened its Lower School (Grades K–5) at capacity in 2009 and added its Upper School at near capacity (Grades 6–11) the following year. In the 2013–14 school year, UCLA-CS enrolled approximately 1,000 students, most of whom are Latina/o, English learners, and economically disadvantaged. The school builds on the cultural resources of families, the community, UCLA, and Los Angeles by offering an innovative dual-language program, multiage instruction, interdisciplinary courses and internship-based learning. Early signs of success include the following: 88 percent of ninth graders are on track for graduation, compared with 65 percent districtwide; the four-year college-going rate is steadily climbing, from 31 percent in 2012 to 55 percent in 2014; and all students report much higher levels of satisfaction and engagement than students across the district.

Colocated with five other schools on the historic site of the former Ambassador Hotel, UCLA-CS is leveraging change within the nation's second largest school district (Los Angeles Unified School District) in several areas. These areas include Common Core State Standards performance assessment, multiple measures of teacher evaluation, dual-language instruction, and learning through internships. The school faculty are all highly qualified, 88 percent are bilingual, most come from the local community. For the past three years, the average annual teacher-retention rate has been 91 percent, 13 percent higher than the national norm for low-income urban schools. UCLA's Center for Research on Educational Standards and Student Testing (CRESST) supports the school's assessment and accountability efforts, and school faculty work closely with UCLA's Center X (the institutional home of UCLA's professional credentialing and advancement

programs for teachers and educational leaders) on professional growth, action research, and retention-oriented staffing policies (Quartz, 2014).

California College Preparatory Academy

The University of California–Berkeley, in partnership with Aspire Public Schools and Berkeley City College, founded the California College Preparatory Academy ("CAL Prep") in 2005. At that time, the Early College Secondary School, originally chartered by the Oakland Unified School District, had 85 students in
Grades 6 and 7. Chartered through Alameda County Office of Education, CAL Prep was serving 225 students in Grades 9–12 by its ninth year. The school's mission is to assist underserved students and their families who face barriers to college-going and help them become fully prepared for pursuing and achieving success in higher education.

In 2008, CAL Prep was designated a California Title I Academic Achievement Award School. Since then, its state ranking has been in the top decile compared with other high schools with similar demographics. All of its graduates have been accepted into four-year colleges or universities. The persistence rates of its graduates (e.g., those still enrolled in college during their third years and beyond) range from 81 percent to 87.5 percent. CAL Prep students also are closing the achievement gap. For example, 55 percent of African-American students were *proficient* or *advanced* in physics on the 2013 California Standards Tests, compared to 26 percent in Alameda County and 35 percent in the state of California (Center for Educational Partnerships, 2013).

CAL Prep teachers engage in a continual cycle of professional learning. They analyze research questions from their classrooms with the aim of building skills in data interpretation and design of research-based instructional interventions. The larger goal is to foster a supportive, sustainable professional community that engages teachers in classroom inquiry aimed at improving their practice and making urban schools more equitable and socially just.

West Sacramento Early College Preparatory Charter School

The University of California–Davis (UC Davis) School of Education in conjunction with Washington Unified School District and Sacramento City College established West Sacramento Early College Preparatory Charter School ("West Sac Prep"), an Early College middle-senior high school, in 2007. West Sac Prep serves approximately 200 students in Grades 6–12. The partners are marshaling their resources and expertise to address low academic performance, high dropout rates, and language barriers to prepare students for college. UC Davis faculty work closely with West Sac Prep teachers to create classrooms where "assessment for learning" is practiced. One key triple-pronged strategy is to engage with teachers to develop complex student-instructional tasks (e.g., in mathematics), to analyze student responses to those tasks, and to plan instruction on the basis of their analysis. This analysis identifies student understandings and misconceptions in order to construct frameworks of student conceptualizations about fractions and algebra as well as strategies in which teachers engage for both error detection and error correction. In time, this knowledge will be mapped onto standards that will help students, parents, and teachers judge student performance.

Strategies for Confronting Obstacles

Although four of these model schools are charter schools, charter school status is not essential for successful detracking. The flexibility that charters enable for on-site decision making concerning faculty employment, curriculum, and the master calendar is certainly helpful, but several traditional schools have exercised the political will to restructure and reculture schools without becoming charter schools.

Burris (2014) presents case studies of three districts and three schools that converted to a detracked curriculum from a tracked curriculum. Although not all schools were "majority minority" schools, all had significant populations of ethnic-minority students and English learners. Themes reoccur across these case studies. Although some educators were responding to court or commission orders to improve schools, all educators seemed to be motivated by a sense of social justice: the necessity of closing the achievement gap between low-income and well-to-do students and the belief that all students—not just "high achieving" students—benefit from a rigorous curriculum. Each school attempting to detrack confronted prejudice (e.g., parents' belief that low-income students cannot handle advanced, rigorous courses), prestige (e.g., the esteem accorded to students [and their parents] by membership in high-track courses or gifted programs), and power (e.g., when powerful parents align with powerful teachers who teach in high-track classes, interests in maintaining the status quo converge to block detracking).

Many strategies can be deployed to confront these obstacles. Six of these strategies are (1) eliminating low-track classes first (which has the effect of "bumping-up" low-track students into more demanding courses, where their improved achievement becomes visible); (2) creating heterogeneous classes gradually (which provides parents the opportunity to enroll their students in higher track classes); (3) installing academic and social scaffolds" to help struggling students; (4) collecting, using, and disseminating achievement data (which can counter emotional prejudice against detracking); (5) carefully selecting, maintaining, and supporting instructional staff (which recognizes that teaching in detracked classes is difficult and requires continual professional development); (6) responding to parents' concerns (which recognizes that parents will benefit from consistent communication about the progress of this innovation). These strategies were more likely to be effective when school and/or district leadership was stable and committed.

Summary and Conclusions

Detracked schools have demonstrated success in preparing low-income students of color for college and university enrollment. Nevertheless, questions remain about the long-term effects of the interventions used. Much of the research on educational inequality emphasizes its entrenched and continuing status. Students graduating from detracked schools, however, express changes in their outlook for the future and credit them partly to the strategic use of extra resources that enabled them to rise above such inequalities. They now feel they can "be somebody." Insofar as these students are on a trajectory to complete college, their material conditions are changing along with their worldview (Mehan, 2012).

These changes in dispositions and prospects for upward mobility suggest that robust institutional arrangements in schools can put a dent in the continuation of educational inequality. Before

becoming overly exuberant, however, educators must ensure that these enhanced prospects for upward mobility will not be suppressed by the privilege-preserving practices of people in positions of power. Educational change can be derailed if authorities choose, for example, to raise credential requirements or suppress access to change-producing mechanisms, including cutting funding to effective programs.

The differences in educational and social mobility that break out along social class and ethnic lines are not the result of the actions (or inactions) of underperforming students, their teachers, or their parents. Instead, such differences result from the distribution of resources among schools and neighborhoods (Cookson, 2013). Schools in low-income neighborhoods lack lab equipment, computers, athletic facilities, and other material resources. They also lack such human resources as effective teachers. This uneven distribution of resources extends to neighborhoods as well. The 25 percent of children in the United States who live below the poverty line are concentrated in urban neighborhoods. Compared to their middle-income contemporaries, the urban poor experience poor nutrition, substandard health care, few job opportunities, neighborhood violence, and environmental toxins—all of which have a strong negative effect on school success.

Blaming teachers and parents will not significantly improve student achievement. If, though, we can protect our children from the effects of poverty by making neighborhoods safe, improving access to health care, and raising employment prospects—in addition to providing high-quality detracked schools, then we have a better chance of improving students' educational opportunities and chances for upward mobility.

References

Alvarez, D., & Mehan, H. (2006). Whole school detracking: A strategy for equity and excellence. *Theory Into Practice 45*(1), 82–89. Retrieved from http://create.ucsd.edu/_files/publications/Whole_School_Detracking0001.pdf

Burris, C. C. (2014). *On the same track: How schools can join the 21st century struggle against resegregation.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Center for Educational Partnerships. (2013). *California College Preparatory Academy (CAL Prep): Many reasons to be proud*. Berkeley: University of California. Retrieved from http://cep.berkeley.edu/sites/all/themes/cepbigpics/images/CALPrep2013-02-25.pdf

Cicourel, A. V., & Mehan, H. (1985). Universal development, stratifying practices and status attainment. *Social Stratification and Mobility, 4,* 3–27.

Cookson, P. W., Jr. (2013). *Class rules: Exposing inequality in American high schools.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1999). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lucas, S. R. (1999). *Tracking inequality: Stratification and mobility in American high schools.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

McClure, L., Strick, B., Jacob-Almeida, R., & Reicher, B. (2005). *The Preuss School at UCSD: School characteristics and students' achievement.* Retrieved from http://create.ucsd.edu/_files/publications/PreussReportDecember2005.pdf

Mehan, H. (2012). *In the front door: Creating a college-bound culture of learning.* Boulder CO: Paradigm.

Oakes, J. (2003). *Critical conditions for equity and diversity in college access: Informing diversity and monitoring results.* Los Angeles: University of California, All Campus Consortium On Research for Diversity (UC ACCORD). Retrieved from http://ucaccord.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/pdf/criticalconditions.pdf

Oakes, J. (2005). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality* (2nd ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Oakes, J., Wells, A. S., Jones, J., & Datnow, A. (1997). Detracking: The social construction of ability, cultural politics, and resistance to reform. *Teachers College Record, 98*(3), 482–510. Retrieved from http://faculty.washington.edu/rsoder/EDUC310/310OakesTracking.pdf

Quartz, K. H. (2014). *University of California Regional Center for University-Assisted Community Schools* [Working paper]. Los Angeles: University of California−Los Angeles, Center X.

Rubin, B. (Ed.). (2006). Detracking and heterogeneous grouping [Special issue]. *Theory Into Practice, 45*(1).

Strick, B. R. (2012). Evidence for the influence of school context on college access. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 20*(35). Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ990113.pdf

U.S. News & World Report. (2014). *Best high schools: The Preuss School.* Retrieved from http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/california/districts/san-diego-unified-school-district/the-preuss-school-3216?int=c0b4c1

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.–Mexican youth and the politics of caring.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Appendices
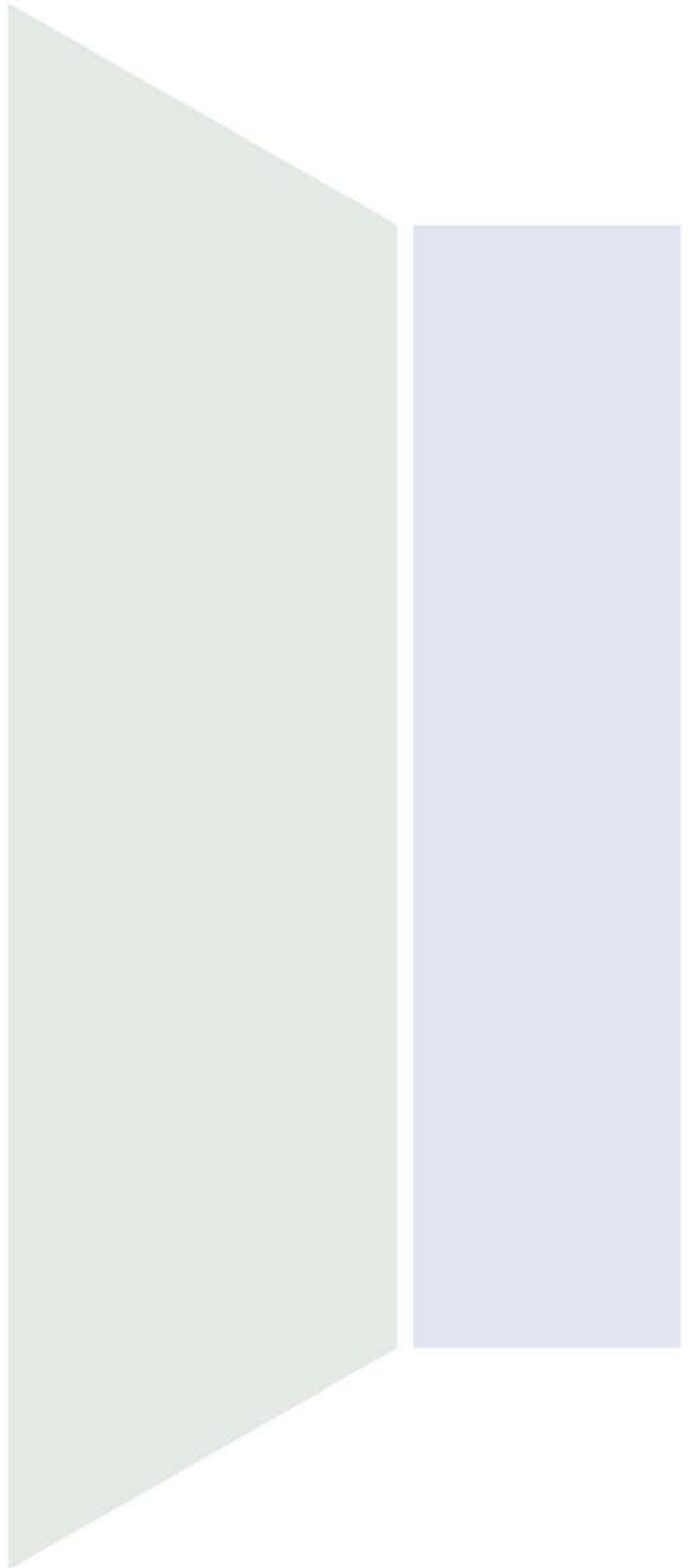
Appendix A. Author Biographies

James A. Banks

James A. Banks is the Kerry and Linda Killinger Endowed Chair in Diversity Studies and director of the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington–Seattle. He is an expert in multicultural education and social studies education. Banks is a past president of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the National Council for the Social Studies. He was a Spencer Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University during the 2005–06 academic year. He is an AERA Fellow and a member of the National Academy of Education.

Dr. Banks is widely considered a founder of multicultural education and has articulated five elements of successful teaching for a diverse group of students: content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture and social structure. Part of his theory is that we need to educate all children so that they can successfully engage with and participate in a democratic society. He asserts that we need culturally sensitive teachers who have the ability to reach within and across cultures and relate to their students. They also need to teach their class in a way that highlights multiple perspectives. His most recent work focuses on citizenship education in multicultural nation-states.

A. Wade Boykin

A. Wade Boykin is a professor and director of the graduate program in the Department of Psychology at Howard University. From 1994 to 2004, he served as codirector of the National Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR). The work of CRESPAR continues at Howard University as the Capstone Institute. Capstone's mission is to provide a comprehensive range of world-class educational services to schools and other learning institutions and in doing so promote the position that all people, regardless of background or circumstances, can learn and perform at the highest levels when the necessary programs, practices, and supports are sufficiently evident.

Dr. Boykin has done extensive work in the area of research methodology; the interface of culture, context, motivation, and cognition; Black child development; and academic achievement in the American social context. He is coeditor of *Research Directions of Black Psychologists* (Russell Sage Foundation) and coauthor of *Creating the Opportunity to Learn: Moving From Research to Practice to Close the Achievement Gap* (ASCD Press). He has conducted research and evaluation projects and conducted workshops on topics such as school reform, culturally responsive pedagogy, and minority student achievement for several school districts in the United States and abroad.

In addition, Dr. Boykin served as a Fellow at the Institute for Comparative Human Development and adjunct associate professor at Rockefeller University; codirector of the Task Force on the Relevance of the Social Sciences to the Black Experience at Yale University; a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, in Palo Alto, California; and a member of the National Academy of Education Panel on Strengthening the Capacity for Research to Contribute to Educational Practice and Public Policy. He also has served as a member of the

American Psychological Association Task Force on Scientific Perspectives on Intelligence Tests and Group Differences in Test Scores and a research advisory panel member for the National Minority Student Achievement Network on the National Mathematics Advisory Panel. Dr. Boykin has received numerous honors including serving as a Spencer Fellow of the National Academy of Education; the Dalmos Jones Distinguished Visiting Professor; City University of New York Graduate Center; a Visiting Mellon Scholar at Teachers College, Columbia University; Distinguished Visiting Flemmie Kittrell Lecturer, Cornell University; and the W. E. B. DuBois Distinguished Lecturer at the annual American Educational Research Association conference.

Peter W. Cookson Jr.

Peter W. Cookson Jr. directs The Equity Project and is a principal researcher at AIR. He also teaches sociology at Georgetown University. His research interests include the sociology of education, social stratification, globalization, school choice, blended learning, and educational reform and new models of educational improvement, and he has written extensively on these topics. As the founder of the Center of Educational Outreach and Innovation and TC Innovations at Teachers College, Columbia University, he initiated many grassroots educational programs in New York City and on the east coast. He is currently assessing the effects of high school culture on long-term student success in Michigan.

Dr. Cookson is the author of more than 15 books on education reform and policy. His most recent work includes *Sacred Trust: A Children's Educational Bill of Rights* (Corwin, 2011), *Hearts on Fire: Twelve Stories of Today's Visionaries Igniting Idealism Into Action* (with Jill Iscol, Random House, 2012), and *Class Rules: Exposing Inequality in American High Schools* (Teachers College Press, 2013), which was voted the best book of the year by The Society of Professors of Education. He served on the editorial board of *The Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education* (Sage, 2012) and blogs frequently for AIR and *The Huffington Post*.

Diana Elliott

Diana Elliott is the research manager for family financial security and mobility at The Pew Charitable Trusts. The project conducts original research to assess differences in family balance sheets across diverse U.S. households and to evaluate the degree to which Americans' short-term economic security relates to their longer term economic mobility. As the lead of Pew's research on American families' financial security and opportunity, Elliott conducts original analyses, communicates and collaborates with outside experts, and guides a team of researchers on best research practices and methodological approaches. As a primary spokesperson for the project, she has presented findings on financial security and mobility at conferences across the country, reaching diverse audiences including policymakers, and has been interviewed on national television and radio news programs and with top print publications.

Elliott previously served as research officer for Pew's economic mobility project, working to build broad nonpartisan agreement on the facts and figures related to mobility and to encourage an active debate on how best to improve opportunity in America. Prior to her work at Pew, she was a family demographer at the U.S. Census Bureau, where she conducted research on marriage, divorce, and family living arrangements. She also worked at the University of Massachusetts–Boston Survey Research Center and at the firm Belden & Russonello, where

she developed questionnaires; conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews; managed surveys in the field; and analyzed quantitative and qualitative findings for academic, nonprofit, and private clients.

David Grusky

David Grusky is professor of sociology at Stanford University, director of the Center on Poverty and Inequality, coeditor of *Pathways Magazine*, and coeditor of the Stanford University Press Social Inequality Series. He is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, recipient of the 2004 Max Weber Award, founder of the Cornell University Center for the Study of Inequality, and a former Presidential Young Investigator.

Dr. Grusky's research addresses the following: (1) the role of rent-seeking and market failure in explaining the takeoff in income inequality, (2) the "Great Gatsby" hypothesis that opportunities for social mobility are declining, (3) the role of essentialism in explaining the striking persistence of gender inequality, (4) the effects of the recession on the payoff to schooling, (5) the development of new methods for measuring poverty more frequently, and (6) the development of a new tax-return infrastructure for measuring social mobility.

Katherine Marshall

Katherine Marshall is a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, and visiting professor in the School of Foreign Service. She has spent four decades working in the area of poverty and international development, including 35 years at the World Bank. Her two most recent books are *Global Institutions of Religion: Ancient Movers, Modern Shakers*, and *The World Bank: From Reconstruction to Development to Equity*. Marshall also serves as the executive director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue.

Hugh Mehan

Hugh Mehan is professor emeritus of sociology and founding director of The Center for Research on Educational Equity, Access, and Teaching Excellence (CREATE) at the University of California–San Diego. He has studied classroom organization, educational testing, tracking, and untracking, focusing on improving the academic preparation of underrepresented students (in terms of college eligibility) and ensuring educational opportunities for all children. Dr. Mehan was elected to the National Academy of Education and has received several teaching and public service awards, including lifetime achievement awards from the Council of Anthropology and Education and the American Educational Research Association.

Jeannie Oakes

Jeannie Oakes is Presidential Professor Emeritus in Education Equity at UCLA, where she founded UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access; the University of California's All Campus Consortium on Research for Diversity; and Center X, UCLA's urban teacher preparation program. In 2014, she completed a six-year term at the Ford Foundation as Director of Educational Opportunity and Scholarship programs worldwide. Her work focuses on improving the quality of education and access of all students and understanding how social

policies impact educational opportunities and outcomes for students of color from low-income families.

Dr. Oakes has published a plethora of books and articles, including *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality*. Previously, she served as the Presidential Professor in Educational Equity at the University of California–Los Angeles (UCLA) Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, directing UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access as well as a cross-campus consortium on diversity research. Dr. Oakes has been involved in the American Educational Research Association (AERA), giving several AERA lectures, winning the Social Justice in Education Research Award, and most recently being voted as the president elect. She has won several other awards and is a member of the National Academy of Education.

Sheryl Petty

Sheryl Petty is an education, equity, and systems change consultant; formerly a principal associate at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University; and a designer and a strategist for the Transforming Education Systems Alliance, which includes institutions—such as the ECCB (Equity-Centered Capacity Building) Network—from across the United States that are experts in ECCB approaches at classroom, school, district/system, community, and state levels.

The ECCB Network was formed to unite the efforts and share resources and strategies among equity- and excellence-centered capacity builders and increase the visibility and the impact of capacity-building approaches that promote deep and sustainable school and systems change. Network members include the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education, the Center for Culturally Responsive Urban Education at the University of Colorado–Denver, the National Equity Project, the Equity Alliance at Arizona State University, the University of Kansas Special Education Department, the Panasonic Foundation, the Intercultural Development Research Association, the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, the Delaware Valley Consortium for Excellence and Equity, and the Education Alliance at Brown University. Network members currently consist of regional and national organizations and focus on transforming whole school systems (in addition to individual schools), with equity, excellence, and cultural responsiveness deeply embedded in their work; local credibility as well as national reach and influence; have a strong desire to work collaboratively; and have a track record of success with school systems locally, regionally, and nationally. Future membership will include both individual and institutional capacity builders who are local as well as other regional and national providers who meet these criteria.

Lois Weis

Lois Weis is State University of New York Distinguished Professor of Sociology of Education at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York. She has written extensively about the current predicament of White, African-American, and Latino/a working class and disadvantaged youth and young adults, and the complex role that gender and race play in their lives in light of contemporary dynamics associated with the global knowledge economy, new patterns of emigration, and the movement of cultural and economic capital across national boundaries.

Dr. Weis is the author and/or editor of numerous books and articles relating to race, class, gender, education and the economy.

Her most recent volumes include *Class Warfare: Class, Race, and College Admissions in Top-Tier Secondary Schools* (with Kristin Cipollone and Heather Jenkins, University of Chicago Press, 2014); *Education and Social Class: Global Perspectives* (edited with Nadine Dolby, Routledge, 2012); *The Way Class Works: Readings on School, Family and the Economy* Routledge, 2008); and *Class Reunion: The Remaking of the American White Working Class* (Routledge, 2004). Her articles have appeared in a wide variety of journals, including *American Educational Research Journal, Review of Educational Research, Harvard Educational Review, Teachers College Record, Signs, Anthropology and Education Quarterly,* and *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, among others. Dr. Weis is a winner of the outstanding book award from the Gustavus Meyers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights in North America as well as a seven-time winner of the American Educational Studies Association's Critic's Choice Award, given for an outstanding book. She also is a member of the National Academy of Education.

Appendix B. Participant List for The Equity Project Research Roundtable

"Educational Equity: Setting a Research Agenda for the Future"

April 30, 2014
Washington, D.C.

James Banks
University of Washington

Beatrice Birman
American Institutes for Research

A. Wade Boykin
Howard University

Gina Burkhardt
American Institutes for Research

Peter Cookson
American Institutes for Research

Maia Cucchiara
Temple University

Diana Elliot
The Pew Charitable Trusts

Michael Feuer
The George Washington University

Larry Friedman
American Institutes for Research

Seth Galanter
U.S. Department of Education

Victor Goode
NAACP

Elizabeth Grant
American Institutes for Research

David Grusky
Stanford University

Erin McNamara Horvat
Temple University

Patrick Hynes
Clinton Global Initiative

Janice Jackson
National Equity Project

Stacey Jordan
American Institutes for Research

Russell Krumnow
Opportunity Nation

Melissa Lazarin
Center for American Progress

Tyra Mariani
U.S. Department of Education

Katherine Marshall
Georgetown University

Hugh Mehan
University of California–San Diego

Tiffany Miller
Center for American Progress

Jeannie Oakes
Ford Foundation

Jennifer O'Day
American Institutes for Research

Sheryl Petty
Annenberg Institute for School Reform
at Brown University

Jorge Ruiz de Velasco
Stanford University

Gretchen Weber
American Institutes for Research

Lois Weis
SUNY–Buffalo, Graduate School of
Education

Tom Weko
American Institutes for Research

Darren Woodruff
American Institutes for Research

THE EQUITY **PROJECT**

at American Institutes for Research ■

The Equity Project at AIR is committed to building an inclusive and vibrant future through education. The project's mission is to use the breadth and depth of AIR's education research, policy, and practice experience to increase educational opportunities for all American children, especially minority children and children from low-income households.

AIR®
AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

1000 Thomas Jefferson Street NW
Washington, DC 20007-3835
202.403.5000
www.air.org