A Never-Ending Cycle? An Analysis of the Attainment Gap in American Education

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Introduction
Why is there such great disparity (in the United States) in both academic achievement and attainment between African Americans and Latinos as opposed to Caucasians? As members of a diverse student body, in a diverse city, it is crucial to make diversity an advantage instead of an issue.

Context
- Educational attainment – number of completed years of school. [1]
- Educational achievement – mastery of basic reading, writing and computational skills. [1]
- The disparity in educational performance between colored students and white students is called the “achievement gap.” [2]
- From a conflict theorist’s perspective, power distribution would be a leading cause of the “achievement gap.” [3]
- As concluded by Gordon et. al, students of color are more likely to drop out than white students. [3]
- According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Hosp and Reschly argue that Black and Latino students perform worse than white students in math, science, reading and writing. [4]
- Colored Students are often perceived negatively and expected to fail, according to Smith. [5]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>California Standards Test (CST): 2004 Multiple-Choice Language Arts 8.5, Score Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student group</td>
<td>Number of students tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: California Standards Test (CST): 2004 Mathematics Score Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student group</th>
<th>Number of students tested</th>
<th>Number of students in Basic Level</th>
<th>Percentage of students in Basic Level</th>
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</thead>
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Score results from the 2004 California Standards Test [5]

In 1999, community organizations in several U.S. cities undertook a study of their local school districts, to determine how they measured up in terms of racial justice. Using a computerized survey instrument called the "Racial Justice Report Card" (sample above), the organizations gathered data from school district offices in 12 cities. The results were devastating. Only one school district—Boston, Massachusetts—received a passing grade, a not very impressive “D.” The rest failed Racial Justice outright.

Results


Conclusion
If the adequate resources were available, we would conduct research by utilizing government data already at our disposal. We would also perform a controlled experiment in which we take a number of black and Hispanic students and enroll them in primarily white schools at a young age. We would observe how the students perform and whether or not they continue their education past high school. We would then compare this data with that of black and Hispanic students in predominantly minority or mixed schools.

References