Social Science and Educational Diversity: A 21st Century Perspective

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Key Question:

- What are the effects of school and classroom composition on educational outcomes?
Answer is important because of demographic changes

- The US is becoming increasingly diverse as a nation
- Since the late 1980s, US schools resegregating
- Fast approaching pre-*Brown* racial isolation
- Irony: as US becomes more diverse, our schools are becoming less so
Diverse schools and classrooms have positive consequences:

- **Short term**
  - Grades, test scores, racial attitudes

- **Long term**
  - Educational and occupational attainment. Intergenerational perpetuation of racial understanding
Preponderance of evidence indicates

- **Cognitive Gains**
  - Achievement: grades, test scores

- **Noncognitive Gains**
  - Appreciation of those who are different
  - Preparation for life and work in diverse communities and workplaces
  - Preparation for citizenship in a multicultural democracy
Compared to racially isolated schools, desegregated schools offer:

- Greater teacher quality and material resources
- Greater depth and breadth of curricular coverage, including more AP courses
- Stronger academic press [expectations from teachers, peers, positive academic school climate]
Desegregated schools offer

- Greater stability of teaching staff and student populations
- Access to broader social networks and cultural capital
- Greater parental involvement
Positive effects from diversity occur at

- elementary
- middle
- and high school levels.
Cognitive outcomes of diversity

- On mathematics and language achievement.

- For students from all racial and social class backgrounds.
Noncognitive Outcomes of Diversity

- Breaks intergenerational transmission of racial fears and hatred
- Diverse residential neighborhoods
- Employment in diverse workplaces
How diversity affects achievement:

- Inhibits automaticity in thinking.
- Stimulates critical thinking and problem solving skills of all students.
- Creates positive academic climate inhibiting misbehavior.
Diverse conditions foster decreases in racism if:

- Sustained interracial contact
- Legitimized by authorities
- Equal status
- Joint effort toward common goal
How diversity affects status attainment

- Expands social networks
- Multiple role models
- Greater exposure to cultural capital
Racial isolation

- Harmful to African American and Latino students

- Research less clear about negative effects for Whites and Asians

- But growing body of research suggests racial isolation hurts Whites and Asians as well.
Are Social Class and Ethnic Diversity the Same? **NO**

- Racial composition is related to but not equivalent to socioeconomic composition.

- Diversity at both levels is important.
Thank you!