Social Science and Educational Diversity: A 21st Century Perspective

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Presentation to the North Carolina NAACP Winter Training
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My research has focused on the following question:

What does social science and educational research tell us about the effects of school and classroom composition on educational outcomes?
My support for this effort comes from three sources:

- American Sociological Association’s Spivack Project
- National Science Foundation
- Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Demographic change

- The US is becoming increasingly diverse as a nation
- Since the late 1980s, US schools resegregating
- Fast approaching pre-\textit{Brown} racial isolation
- Irony: as US becomes more diverse, our schools are becoming less so
Preponderance of the Evidence Indicates Diversity Has

- Short term effects on:
  - Grades, test scores, racial attitudes
- Long term effects on
  - Educational and occupational attainment, & intergenerational perpetuation of racial understanding
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 also offer

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

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

- mathematics and language achievement.
- for students from all racial and social class backgrounds.
Noncognitive Outcomes of Diversity in K-12 Schools

- Break intergenerational transmission of racial fears and hatred
- Foster living in diverse residential neighborhoods
- Foster successful employment in diverse workplaces
Diversity improves cognitive outcomes by

- Inhibiting automaticity in thinking.
- Stimulating critical thinking and problem solving skills of all students.
- Creating positive academic climate and inhibiting misbehavior.
Diversity will decrease prejudice and racism

- If schools and classrooms offer
  - Sustained interracial contact
  - Contact is legitimimized by authorities
  - All students have equal status
  - There are joint effort toward common goal…
Diversity positively affects status attainment by

- Expanding social networks
- Multiplying role models
- Offering greater exposure to cultural capital
On the other hand, racial isolation is

- Harmful to African American and Latino students
- Yet research less clear about negative effects for Whites and Asians
- However, a 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.
What is the current situation in North Carolina schools?
Schools Becoming Less Integrated

% of Schools With 80% or More Non-White Students

Source: Public School Forum based upon data from DPI, Financial & Business Services
Racial Isolation in Charlotte Mecklenburg High Schools, 2001-02 thru 2005-06
UNC Center for Civil Rights, January 2007

- **Percent High School Students in a Racially Imbalanced School.** (Definition: School's Enrollment Either For White Students, Or Conversely For Nonwhite Students, Exceeds District Average For This Group By More Than 15 Percentage Points.)
- **Percent High School Students in a Racially Isolated School.** (Definition: School Is More Than 80% White or Nonwhite.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Students in Racially Imbalanced Schools</th>
<th>Students in Racially Isolated Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>16,678 out of 28,653</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>20,845 out of 29,763</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>24,269 out of 31,338</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>28,334 out of 32,854</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>29,644 out of 34,495</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Consistency of High-Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>% high-poverty schools that are high-performing</th>
<th>% low-poverty schools that are high-performing</th>
<th>% high-poverty, high-minority schools that are high-performing</th>
<th>% low-poverty, low-minority schools that are high-performing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Years 1, Subjects 1, Grades 1</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Years 2, Subjects 1, Grades 1</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Years 1, Subjects 2, Grades 1</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>66.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Years 1, Subjects 1, Grades 2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Years 2, Subjects 2, Grades 1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Years 2, Subjects 1, Grades 2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Years 1, Subjects 2, Grades 2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Years 2, Subjects 2, Grades 2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Education Trust Definition</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Erosion (from row 9 to row 8)</td>
<td>93 %</td>
<td>55 %</td>
<td>97 %</td>
<td>53 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reprinted from Ending the Blame Game on Educational Inequity: A Study of "High Flying Schools" and NCLB, p. 23, by Douglas N. Harris, Assistant Professor, School of Education, Florida State University, published by Arizona State University: Education Policy Research Unit, March 2006.
Black, Hispanic and White Participation in Advanced Placement Courses Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, 2003-04 thru 2005-06
UNC Center for Civil Rights, January 2007

**English**

- English IV AP 2003-04: 18 African American, 8 Hispanic, 15 All Ethnicities
- English IV AP 2004-05: 15 African American, 6 Hispanic, 20 All Ethnicities
- English IV AP 2005-06: 14 African American, 8 Hispanic, 17 All Ethnicities

**Calculus**

- Calculus AP 2003-04: 584 African American, 569 Hispanic, 578 All Ethnicities
- Calculus AP 2004-05: 8 African American, 569 Hispanic, 578 All Ethnicities
- Calculus AP 2005-06: 4 African American, 578 Hispanic, 578 All Ethnicities
Black, Hispanic and White Participation in Advanced Placement Courses Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, 2003-04 thru 2005-06
UNC Center for Civil Rights, January 2007

### Biology

- **African American**
  - Biology II AP 2003-04: 8
  - Biology II AP 2004-05: 2
  - Biology II AP 2005-06: 8

- **Hispanic**
  - Biology II AP 2003-04: 2
  - Biology II AP 2004-05: 2
  - Biology II AP 2005-06: 8

- **All Ethnicities**
  - Biology II AP 2003-04: 272
  - Biology II AP 2004-05: 133
  - Biology II AP 2005-06: 182

### Chemistry

- **African American**
  - Chemistry II AP 2003-04: 8
  - Chemistry II AP 2004-05: 4
  - Chemistry II AP 2005-06: 0

- **Hispanic**
  - Chemistry II AP 2003-04: 0
  - Chemistry II AP 2004-05: 0
  - Chemistry II AP 2005-06: 0

- **All Ethnicities**
  - Chemistry II AP 2003-04: 214
  - Chemistry II AP 2004-05: 175
  - Chemistry II AP 2005-06: 184
What Can We Do?
Challenge Teacher, Parent, and Administrator Beliefs about Diversity

- When do we begin to group students?
- How do we rationalize sorting students?
- How does sorting affect later opportunities?
- On what basis do we assign students to schools?
Taking On Critics

- Cultivation of Political Support
  - Build a political base for diverse schools

- Challenge Beliefs About Tracking
  - Gifted, average, remedial are acquired, socially constructed labels
Acknowledge the 1000 lb. Elephants in the Room….

- Children benefit from their privileged status in the segregated and tracked educational system

- Diversity opponents’ fears of
  - Diluted quality of instruction
  - Undisciplined students
  - Cultural contamination
  - More competitors for top university seats
Navigating the Politics of Educational Diversity

- School board strategies
- Central office strategies
- School-level strategies
- Community Consensus
  - Corporate world
  - Civil rights and progressive groups
  - Religious communities
  - Educators
School Board Strategies

- Commit to principles underlying detracking
- Develop comprehensive reform plan
- Engage the community so all have effective voice
- Public engagement about equity and excellence
- Have reasonable and rigorous detracking standards
Central Office Strategies

- Emphasize basis of detracking:
  - All children can learn,
  - All are entitled to high quality education
- Ensure every school has necessary support
- Incentives for teachers working with heterogeneous groups
- Work with local media
- Augment public relations office with office of community & parent relations
Building-level strategies

- Provide teaching staff with knowledge and skills for heterogeneous classes
- Faculty study groups
- Parent advisory groups
- Disseminate information about diversity
Practical Resources for Educators

- Theory Into Practice
  2006 Special Issue devoted to *Detracking and Heterogeneous Grouping*
  Volume 45 Number 1
Navigating the Politics of Detracking

By Kevin Welner & Jeannie Oakes

- Booklet available free
Thank you!