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## Lessening Strategies to Overcome the Existing Achievement Gaps of Students of Color in the USA

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### Abstract

*This paper is prepared by reviewing literature that focuses on the ways to reduce the achievement gaps of students of color in the US. There are definite ways that are anticipated to reduce the gaps among and between students of color. The methods of investigation are based on content analysis. In this analysis, we addressed the factors that contributed to the gap: genetics factors, where they were born, the community, and neighborhood that they grew up in, and the socioeconomic situation of parents. The required Interventions to lessen the gaps included promoting interest that can contribute to a more engaged, motivated, and by sharing a successful learning experience of older students. The other solution will be for the school districts or the state to consciously allocate resources to meet a wide range of diverse pupil needs for additional support.*

**Keywords:** achievement gaps, students of color, opportunity gaps, Brown people

### 1. Introduction

This world is full of gaps of many kinds, because human beings are not monolithic rather have differences in quite a lot of traits. There are various gaps in culture, gender, income, technology, knowledge etc. Such gaps are common and it can be considered as 'business as usual.' However, the obvious differences among people mainly based on skin color is used as a gap to discriminate between people. With these facts, the prevalence of the achievement gaps is Inevitable and apparent.

The achievement and opportunity gaps are commonly interchangeable and often confusing phrases. Ryann A., (2017)

defined the achievement of students as grade point average, school attendance, test scores, and graduation rate. Susan (2017) defined it as the extent, referring to the disparity, in academic performance between groups of students. In this study, we can also try to discern an achievement gap in academics that might be created because of an opportunity gap in other social and economic fabriques.

In areas of education, the achievement gap between students is very common. Some studies figure out the achievement gaps in terms of gender. Elena M., Belinda A. and Walter H., (2019) explained there are gender gaps in the areas of STEM (Science,

Technology, Engineering and Math). Furthermore, this gap might be very high in social sciences or natural nation fields.

In this paper, we focus on the achievement gaps in terms of race. Our study focuses on the achievement gaps of brown students and how to reduce the gap to bridge their achievement gaps in academic performance.

Ryann A., (2017), and Davis K., Pamela E., and Jager J., (2014) have shown that currently in the United States, there is a gap between academic achievement of white and non-white students in the school system. Moreover, it is now clear that a racial gap in achievement exists and is potentially growing (Fryer & Levitt, 2002).

The achievement gap among races is obvious. Burns et al. (2019) explained that the achievement of black students was lower than that of the white students. In their research they found that the gap was even very wide i.e. the score of brown students in math being 16 and that of white 65, which was a fourfold gap.

At the very outset, we have attempted to investigate how the gaps among students of color are created. Even though students are using the same textbooks and curriculum, the same level of teachers, there exists a gap in their achievement. Studies have shown that the contributing factors for the existing achievement gaps of students are family background (characteristics of the parents e.g., education, family size, marital status or home environment) as well as the socio-economic situation of the parents. To start with, the opportunity gap has brought significant and persistent differences in academic achievement between different student groups.

The achievement gaps are determined by various factors. Eric, Paul, Laura and Ludger (2021), explained that it depends on the students' family background, who they are and how they grew up, and their socioeconomic situation. The other components are the family size large or small, marital status of the parents' i.e. single and married couples, the neighborhood style and the community that they grew up and live with and the educational background of the family will also determine the gap of the students' achievement.

However, reducing the achievement gaps is an issue which is lingering in the minds of most parents, students of color, teachers and even politicians. In this review, we personally believe that when different intervention strategies are applied, those gaps will be reduced gradually and eliminated. This review analysis addresses the intervention strategies applied to our students and the outcomes.

## 2. Analytical Methods

The method of this inquiry was mainly on content-based scrutiny which involved the use of secondary data by reviewing various literature. Most of the articles used are peer reviewed primary research papers. Furthermore, some relevant internet sources were used to strengthen the idea. A participatory technique was also incorporated because both of the researchers are currently living in the USA being a teacher and observing those issues acting as a part of the data inputs.

The students of color and brown are two concepts used in one and sometimes in different ways. Students of color is a term used for students who identify as Black or African-American, Latina, Asian, Native American and/or multiple of the aforementioned

racial identities. But Brown or brown people is a racial and ethnic term. Like black people and white people, it is a term for race based on human skin color. Therefore, in this analysis we will use both words interchangeable.

## 3. Related Work

### 3.1. Brown, Opportunity and Achievement Gaps

#### 3.1.1. Brown

Brown, as a simple color, is a derivative color that is obtained by mixing red, yellow and black colors. However the concept of 'Brown' has changed a little bit through time since the 18th century. Cameron & Barry (2012) states that European and American writers have been using the word 'Brown' in connection with race so that the writers used the term and concept of 'Brown' in their race theories.

The term "brown" was scribed by people who are not white, including some people who also identify as Asian-American. When the term 'Brown' is used to describe a certain section of human race, Stoddard (1920) cited in Cameron & Barry (2012) states 'Brown', is one of the five "primary races", contrasting with "white", "black", "yellow" and "Amerindian." It is a racial and ethnic term given for a certain race based on their skin color. Thus, 'Brown' describes people who are not white, including some people who also identify as Asian-American (Cameron & Barry 2012).

They describe a "brown race" as native to North Africa, and the East or Horn of Africa. The recent studies also depicted that Ethiopians and Egyptians in Africa were included in the 'Brown' race. However, Stoddard (1920) cited in Cameron & Barry (2012) concludes that the near and Middle East as a Brown Man's Land'. This in turn implies that brown is a general and an inclusive word which refers to people from all over the world. In short, it is a classification that includes all races except white. But the scope of this analysis will be limited only on black African Americans.

#### 3.1.2. Opportunity Gap

The "opportunity gap" refers to the lack, absence or short-fall of the arbitrary access, right and / or support circumstances in which certain groups of people determine their future success in life. In education, "opportunity gap" refers to the significant and persistent difference between different groups of students in the availability and use of the minimum satisfactory conditions for academic performance. Pedro et al (2015) explained that the opportunity gap is now widely accepted and that, to succeed in the future, all young people must have the opportunity to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and others such as "deeper learning" skills. Those opportunities can no longer be the purview of the privileged few but the disparities in students' learning opportunities created.

#### 3.1.3. Achievement Gap

The term achievement may be defined as a successful result or outcome gained through one's own effort. Ryann A., (2017) defines achievement in schools as grade point average, school attendance, test scores, and graduation rate. Susan (2017) defines 'achievement gap' in education as a difference in academic performance between groups of students. This kind of achievement gap may be shown up in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates, among other success measures.

Ryann A., (2017) further states that White (non-Latino) students are outperforming students of color, and many students of color are

not meeting the necessary criteria to graduate from high school. Davis K., Pamela E., and Jager J., (2014) and Burns, et al (2019) substantially explained what opportunity and achievement gaps are. They explain the gaps between students of color and their White counterparts and between the growing number of students living in poverty and their affluent peers. They have also stated that the achievement and opportunity gaps can be seen on the test score of the students.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

In this section, an attempt has been made to identify some parameters that we can use to measure the student's achievement. The research suggests that there are various elements that can serve as a measuring-criteria for the gaps. These achievement gap measuring points will give highlights to the reason why those gaps came into being.

To be forthright, the prevailing gaps are connected with several factors. It might be highly linked with family and community socio-economic background. It might be widened for that fact of the lack of adult close follow up. The other obvious reason happened due to the fact that brown students do not have model public figures from the family that they want to see and follow their footsteps.

Among various factors that contribute to the achievement gaps, Eric, Paul, Laura and Ludger (2021), found that parental education, income, and race are strongly associated with student achievement, while school resources such as per-pupil expenditures and class size are much less significant. They also disclose that family background and the socio-economic situation has a forefront effect on the student academic performance. Subsequent research has confirmed these findings that there is little dispute that students' performance in school is strongly affected by their family background (James Coleman and colleagues, as cited in Eric, Paul, Laura and Ludger (2021).

A variety of socio-economic status of families has contributed a lot to students' academic achievement. For instance, children growing up in poorer households and communities are at greater risk of traumatic stress and other medical problems that can affect brain development. James Coleman and colleagues, as cited in Eric, Paul, Laura and Ludger (2021) mentioned some points to strengthen their argument. College-educated mothers speak more frequently to their infants, use a larger vocabulary with their toddlers, and are more likely to use parenting practices that respect the autonomy of a growing child. Higher-income families have access to more-enriching schooling environments, and they generally do not face the high rates of violent crime experienced by those in extremely impoverished communities. All these and other childhood or adolescent experiences contribute to profound socio-economic disparities in academic achievement.

Beside the family and socio economic factors, Qishan, et al (2018) also mentioned some of the school characteristics (e.g., class size, teacher's competency, low resources) as an issue. They mention other characteristics of the parents (e.g., income, family size, marital status) or home environment (e.g., warmth, reading, number of books, and visits to the library) may be the most important factors.

Another writer, Sharkey (2009) argued that "only a very small percentage of White children live in high-poverty neighborhoods throughout childhood, while a majority of Black children do, a

pattern that has not changed in 30 years." A total of 62 percent of Black children born in 1955 – 1970 were raised in neighborhoods with at least a 20 percent poverty rate compared with just six percent of White children. For children born in 1985 – 2000, the comparable percentages were 62 and four. This finding implies that whether they were born in 1955 or in 2000, there is no change on black people's situation but there is slight change on white people's side. What hasn't changed? Why was the one born in 1955 and in 2000 the same?

Sharkey (2009) further states as "If Black and White children had grown up in neighborhoods with similar poverty rates (i.e., if Whites had grown up where Blacks did or Blacks had grown up where Whites did), the gap is still the same, but the writer has seen downward mobility would be smaller by one fourth to one-third." Sharkey pins it down Neighborhood poverty has the effects of parental education, occupation, labor force participation, and a range of other family characteristics. The writer created in addition to poverty — unemployment rates, families headed by a single mother, levels of racial segregation, and the age distribution in the neighborhood are factor to contribute for the gaps.

The achievement gap shows the general issue of disparities within the home and schooling environment (Davis K., Pamela E., and Jager J., (2014). The study hypothesized that there would be multiple achievement trajectories within each race/ethnicity characterized by (at a minimum) a high and a low achieving group. Conversely, the achievement gaps may be high at the initial year of the study but decrease across time. Therefore, achievement gaps within race can lead to more specific models of achievement. It might occur due to the genetic level at birth.

Bueno (2019) explicitly mentioned the correlation of academic and genetics. The brain is the organ of thought, which is an idea or opinion, or a set of ideas about a particular subject. It implicitly includes the processes of learning. Education relies on this learning capacity and it should optimize cognitive functions taking into account human culture. Working memory is also all about the cognitive system responsible for temporarily holding information available for processing. The gap might also be highly connected with the student's genetic situation i.e. natural talent, because success is connected with the genetic situation of the student.

Bueno also mentions that it might be that children will enjoy academic success that can now be predicted at birth. The study found that parents' socio-economic status and children's inherited DNA, and IQ level differences are powerful predictors of educational achievement. Genes have been shown to influence how well children do at the end of compulsory education, and even in. Thus a child's genes significantly influence their long-term performance in school – beyond even intelligence.

In some cases, it might occur due to the so-called systemic segregation of white people on black in politics, in the school, and others. Some centuries ago blacks were separated from whites by law and in transportation, public accommodations, recreational facilities, prisons, armed forces, and schools in both Northern and Southern states. In 1896, the Supreme Court also sanctioned legal separation of the races. Black people could not even be considered as citizens until the 14th amendment, "All 'persons,' born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are 'citizens.'" Nevertheless, even at present this situation seems to work nominally, not actually because segregation among people is an undeniable fact and it is also seen in the 21st century.

The Supreme Court declared in 1954 a “separate-but-equal” doctrine between peoples. It necessarily violated a guaranteed “equal protection” to all people under the law. The court also ordered an end to school segregation.

The achievement gaps also might have happened because of all those seeds sowed for a long period of time and now they are ripening and harvesting it. We don’t want to go far, why did they sow the haterness seed but it happened due to their situation in their era and the then system is also existing. However, let us think and contribute to reducing the gaps. Therefore, we all are supposed to see the ways how we can stop or reduce it. It is an ideal solution for the existing racial trauma in the US.

## 5. Strategic ways to lessen the Gaps

In research, a problem well identified is half solved. This analysis also mentions the gaps which by itself is not the solution but it helped to pinpoint the solutions to fill in. Students of color will develop their own solutions and they will serve as a tool to work more to reduce the gaps and their role in the community. In this review we emphasize certain strategies that would lessen the existing gaps among students.

First, the strategy that would lessen the gap is rising family income, and education background. Paul and Richard, (2010) explained this idea. To bring change on the achievement gaps, the family income, education of the mother and father, and siblings, is crucial. The family income, level of education, is key for the kiddo. However, the other studies reached the same conclusion that improvements in the circumstances of minority families relative to White families made a sizable contribution to reducing the gap than black. The study found that parents' socio-economic status and children's inherited capacity are powerful predictors of educational achievement. Thus the success is somewhat genetic.

The second factor would be the change of community and peers that they grew up with and live with. Sharkey (209:4) finds, “If Black and White children had grown up in neighborhoods with similar poverty rates, this might be the gap that is still the same. Sharkey pins it down Neighborhood poverty has the effects of parental education, occupation, labor force participation, and a range of other family characteristics. In spite of the fact that Davis K., Pamela E., and Jager J., (2014), the achievement gap shows the general issue of disparities within the home and schooling environment. Therefore, it contributes to the blessing of achievement gaps within race.

The third factor would be that desegregation had a positive effect on Black students and no effect on White students. Student grouping practices do not seem to be a promising avenue for understanding changes in the gap, because the data are unavailable to examine how practices may have changed over time. However, future investigations employing controlled experiments may yield useful results. The effects of desegregation on achievement have concluded that it had a positive effect on Black students but it doesn’t have an effect on White students. Thus Instead of segregation let us embrace people of color and do good things. Unless the gap and haterness goes wider and wider of the gap also.

Grissmer and colleagues examined the regional patterns of desegregation over the period when the gap narrowed. However, the authors pointed out that the gains in both desegregation and achievement in the South, where the gains were the largest among the regions, could have signaled to Black parents and students

nationwide, and their teachers, that Black children’s education was a national priority that would be backed by money and legal authority (Paul and Richard 2010).

The fourth factor is working a lot to reduce the class size. A long debate has raged over whether reducing class sizes contributes to increases in achievement and, if so, how much. A large experimental program, Project Star, used randomly selected control groups to examine the issue. Ronald Ferguson revisited the findings of Project Star with particular emphasis on results, pointing to lower class sizes having a greater effect for Black than for White students. Ferguson says: “If, as the evidence indicates, Black children are more sensitive than Whites to teachers’ perceptions, and Black children’s work habits and behavioral problems present greater challenges to teachers, smaller classes that are easier for teachers to manage may have more impact on improving Black students’ scores than Whites” (Paul & Richard, 2010).

Strategies should be with regard to equal provision and more support to students of color. Some of the interventions are providing more support for afterschool programs and allocating resources for equity. Providing more support for afterschool programs is an intervention aimed at school-based contexts. In the afterschool program the teachers focus on leveraging student interest by giving the list of courses or subjects by recognizing their strengths and giving them the option which one they land one it. This intervention will reduce the gap of achievement.

Districts should also focus on resource adequacy and equity—not only in how they allocate funds to school sites and programs, but also in how they build, and resource supports for struggling students. In particular, districts can spend funds efficiently when they invest in expert teachers who are assigned to teach students with greater needs and to mentor the teachers in those contexts, when they design and fund effective programs for those students, and when they intervene early and effectively for students who may struggle. All the stakeholders are supposed to work more to improve the STEM courses, mainly math and English performance.

In fact, the provision of opportunities is also extremely important to shrink the achievement gaps among the white and brown students. The study also answers the question, “do we think that providing an opportunity by itself would bring a change in their achievement? Yes, of course.

## 6. Conclusion

The Importance of this study focuses on ways to reduce the achievement gaps of students of Color by increasing the provision of opportunities. This study concluded that if we address the provision of opportunities that would play a big role in seeing the reduction in the achievement gaps. However, Sharkey (209:4) finds, “Whites had grown up where Blacks did or Blacks had grown up where Whites did), the gap is still the same, but it would be smaller by one fourth to one-third.” This writer believes that Neighborhood poverty has adverse effects on parental education, occupation, labor force participation, and a range of other family characteristics. The current literature and the study even come close to examining those questions. That’s where the research needs to head next – examining best practices of how far the provision opportunity plays a great role for the achievement gap.

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## 8. Conflict of Interest

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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