

Connecting the Dots

How Race in America's Classrooms Affects Achievement

Chapter two from

Can We Talk About Race?

And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation

by

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As part of a program sponsored by the National Staff Development Council, an organization committed to ensuring success for all students through staff development and school improvement, I had the opportunity to dialogue with colleagues from around the country about some of the challenges associated with what I call antiracist professional development for educators. One man expressed his frustration that many school districts only wanted to talk about closing the "achievement gap," usually defined as a disparity in school performance between White students and students of color (particularly Black and Latino students) as evidenced by standardized test scores and overall grade point averages. The decision makers he described did not want to invest resources of time or money in any larger conversations about race in schools. How, he asked, could he persuade them to support antiracist professional development?

I replied: You have to help them see how unexamined racial attitudes can negatively impact student performance, and how a willingness to break the silence about the impact of race in schools as part of a program of antiracist professional development can improve achievement. *You have to connect the dots.* At a time when America is fixated myopically on test-score disparities yet making little progress on eliminating them, we all need to see the connections between notions of race and intelligence in America's classrooms, the academic achievement of underperforming students of color, and the benefit of antiracist professional development. Connecting those dots is my project in this chapter.

We must always begin by acknowledging the social and historical context in which we operate. That context shapes in powerful ways how we think and act. One important dimension of that context is the fact that American schools were never designed to educate everyone. We often talk about the importance of an educated citizenry for a successful democracy, and I certainly agree that such a citizenry is necessary. However, when our democracy was being established, only White male landowners could vote. The educated citizenry that our founding fathers had in mind did not include many of the people who will read this essay. White women were not allowed to vote until 1920. The Constitution originally defined enslaved Africans as equivalent to three-fifths of a person without the rights of citizenship, and in slaveholding states it was illegal to educate them. The right to vote was hard-won, and not guaranteed for African Americans until the Voting Rights Act of 1965, less than a lifetime ago. As I have argued, the history of desegregation of the public schools during the 1960s and 1970s and the subsequent resegregation of schools in the 1980s and 1990s following key Supreme Court decisions make evident that race still matters in schools.¹ From the beginning, American constructions of race and class have determined who had access to education, and to a large degree those constructions still shape how we think about who can benefit from it.

Additionally, American constructions of intelligence, closely interwoven with our notions of race and class, have shaped how we think about who can benefit from education. Historically, our schools have been structured to identify those with high potential and

those without, and to sort them accordingly. Fundamentally, that is the purpose of ability grouping, also known as tracking, a well-established practice in schools across the country. Although today I often hear educators and politicians alike emphasize the idea that all children can and must learn at a high level, I sometimes wonder if they really believe their own rhetoric. If they do, such thinking represents a recent shift in ideology that still is not reflected in the organizational structure of most schools. Tracking persists. The technological demands of the information age make greater levels of academic achievement and postsecondary education a necessity, but our schools still reflect the assumptions of the industrial age, when the majority of students were expected to enter the world of work performing routinized tasks, rather than pursue advanced education and professions requiring critical analysis or creative thinking. The idea of widespread access to a college education is a relatively new concept in our society, and we have never provided the necessary preparation in a widespread way. No wonder we find it hard to do now.

If we are really serious about creating learning environments that foster high levels of achievement for all of our students, irrespective of race and class, we have to examine and challenge a fundamental notion central to the educational process—the notion of intelligence. The concept of intelligence as an inborn attribute that determines one's capacity to learn is an idea firmly embedded in our society and our educational system.² And who can question that some people seem to process information faster than others? We see evidence of that all around us, every day. I do not question that there may be individual variation in the speed of our neural synapses. The question we might ask is, How fast is fast enough? The social psychologist and educator Jeff Howard has argued that if you have learned to speak your native language by the age of three (a task of considerable cognitive complexity), then you have all the synaptic speed you need to be successful in school. The key to your success in school is not inborn ability, but rather effective effort produced in the context of high expectations.³ But this idea that most of us are *smart enough* to achieve at a high level in school runs counter to our long-standing practice of testing and sorting. So where did the idea of testing and sorting come from—and what does it have to do with race?

THE AMERICAN INVENTION OF INTELLIGENCE AND THE POWER OF EXPECTATIONS

To answer that question, we need to go back to the introduction of the idea of intelligence as something that could be quantified and measured using standardized tests. Alfred Binet, a French psychologist, is credited with inventing the first intelligence test in 1905, though that was not his stated intention. He was commissioned by the French minister of public education to develop techniques for identifying children who might need special educational services. The test he created was intended to be administered individually, and he was very specific about how his new measure should be used. He believed that intelligence was too multidimensional to capture with a single number or score, and he worried that the use of his test would lead to inappropriate labeling of children. Binet insisted that the test he created should *not* be used as a general device for ranking all students—but should only be used for the *limited* purpose of identifying children whose

poor performance might indicate a need for special education, those who today might be classified as mildly retarded or perhaps having specific learning disabilities. The aim of testing, he said, should be to identify children in order to help them improve, not to place labels on them which in themselves could become limiting.⁴

However, as Stephen Jay Gould documents in his classic text, *The Mismeasure of Man*, all of Binet's caveats were disregarded when his test was imported to America. The misuse of his and other tests was fueled by two ideas that were actively embraced by leading American psychologists in the early twentieth century. The first is the idea of reification—the assumption that test scores represent a single, measurable characteristic of brain functioning called general intelligence. The second is the idea of hereditarianism, the assumption that intelligence, as measured by tests, is largely inherited, and thus independent of major environmental differences between racial and ethnic groups in our society. Perhaps not surprisingly, the hereditarian theory of intelligence grew in popularity in America at a time of extreme nationalism during the early twentieth century, a time when a wave of immigration from southern and eastern Europe was taking place. Two prominent psychologists, Henry Herbert Goddard and Lewis M. Tetman, played pivotal roles in the spread of these ideas.⁵

Goddard is sometimes called the father of intelligence testing because he first translated Binet's test into English and introduced it into the United States. His interest was inspired by his work as the director of an institution in New Jersey called the Vineland Training School for Feeble-Minded Girls and Boys. He enjoyed his work with the students there and became very interested in both the causes of mental deficiency and the teaching methods employed by the instructors. His research facility at the school has been described as the first laboratory for the scientific study of mentally retarded persons. In Goddard's day, there were three categories of mental deficiency: idiots, imbeciles, and feeble-minded.

Idiots and imbeciles (language considered offensive today) were what we would now identify as severely or moderately retarded individuals. Those who could not develop full speech and had a mental age below three were considered idiots, and those with a mental age between three and seven who could not master written language were considered imbeciles, categories relatively easy to identify. Goddard's interest in testing was sparked by his concern about identifying those who were what he called "high-grade defectives" or "morons," people who could function in society but who were "feeble-minded." In his view, such people were a menace because they threatened to weaken the gene pool of American intelligence.⁶

Goddard was the first popularizer of the Binet test in America; he believed that the test was perfect for identifying the feeble-minded, but unlike Binet, his goal was not to help these individuals perform better in school. Goddard considered the test scores as measures of a single, innate entity, and his goal was to identify the mentally deficient, then segregate them and keep them from having children, in order to prevent the demise of American society. Clearly he was a believer in eugenics, though he acknowledged that

widespread sterilization of people of low intelligence was impractical.⁷ He was not alone in his concern about the threat that such individuals posed, however.

By the end of the nineteenth century, American concern about immigration was growing, fueled by fears that a large percentage of the new arrivals were mentally deficient. In 1882 the United States Congress passed a law prohibiting people believed to be mentally defective from passing through the Ellis Island checkpoint. Enforcing this law proved to be difficult, because as many as five thousand immigrants needed to be inspected each day. In 1910 Goddard was among those invited to Ellis Island to investigate how the screening process might be expedited. In 1912 he returned to the island, accompanied by two specially trained assistants. The procedure he developed was a two-step process. One assistant would visually screen for suspected mental defectives as the immigrants passed through the checkpoint. These individuals would then proceed to another location, where the other assistant would assess them with a variety of performance measures and a revised version of the Binet test. Goddard believed that trained inspectors could be more accurate than the Ellis Island physicians; the key to their success was expertise developed through experience.⁸ In 1913 Goddard wrote:

After a person has had considerable experience in this work, he almost gets a sense of what a feeble-minded person is so that he can tell one afar off. The people who are best at this work, and who I believe should do this work, are women. Women seem to have closer observation than men. It was quite impossible for others to see how these two young women could pick out the feeble-minded without the aid of the Binet test at all.⁹

Among those tested according to the procedures utilized by Goddard and his staff in 1912, 83 percent of the Jews, 80 percent of the Hungarians, 79 percent of the Italians, and 87 percent of the Russians were identified as "feeble-minded." The number of immigrants who were deported increased dramatically as a result of Goddard's new screening measures.¹⁰ Even Goddard was surprised that these percentages were so high, but the data did not lead him—as it should have—to conclude that there was a problem with his assessment procedure. He resolved, instead, that the United States was now scraping the bottom of the barrel as far as the immigrant populations were concerned. In 1917 he wrote, "We cannot escape the general conclusion that these immigrants were of surprisingly low intelligence We are now getting the poorest of each race."

However, by 1928 Goddard had changed his mind about the value of those individuals that his procedures had determined were of limited intelligence. He wrote: "They do a great deal of work that no one else will do There is an immense amount of drudgery to be done, an immense amount of work for which we do not wish to pay enough to secure more intelligent workers May it be that possibly the moron has his place."¹²

Although Goddard is credited with bringing Binet's scale to America, it was Lewis Terman, a Stanford University professor, who brought it to American schools. Terman revised the test to create the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale. The test as standardized by Terman led to the simplification of test results represented by a single number, a number we commonly refer to as IQ, or intelligence quotient. A score of 100 was

established as the norm for "average" children.¹³ Like Goddard, Terman was an influential psychologist, and he had strongly held views about the fixed and unchanging quality of intelligence as an inherited characteristic. He was also an advocate of eugenics, and he expressed his views on the subject in a widely used textbook, published in 1916, titled *The Measurement of Intelligence*.¹⁴ He shared Goddard's concerns about the negative impact on society by the "feeble-minded." Terman wrote:

Among laboring men and servant girls there are thousands like them. They are the world's "hewers of wood and drawers of water." And yet, as far as intelligence is concerned, the tests have told the truth No amount of school instruction will ever make them intelligent voters or capable citizens in the true sense of the word The fact that one meets this type with such frequency among Indians, Mexicans, and [N]egroes suggests quite forcibly that the whole question of racial differences in mental traits will have to be taken up anew and by experimental methods Children of this group should be segregated in special classes and be given instruction which concrete and practical. They cannot master abstractions, but they can often be made efficient workers, able to look out for themselves. There is no possibility at present of convincing society that they should not be allowed to reproduce, although from a eugenic point of view they constitute a grave problem because of their unusually prolific breeding.¹⁵

Although these ideas sound sinister today, these were mainstream writers and thinkers who enjoyed considerable influence in the American educational system. The Stanford-Binet test led to widespread testing in American schools, and the results were used to sort students according to their measured ability. Terman's test gave U.S. educators the first simple, quick, cheap, and seemingly objective way to "track" students, or assign them to different course sequences according to their perceived ability.

The notion of intelligence testing was further popularized during World War I, when Robert Yerkes developed the Army mental tests, the first mass-administered intelligence test, used to screen U.S. Army recruits and determine appropriate assignments. The test was given to 1.75 million recruits.¹⁶ Like Goddard and Terman, Yerkes believed that IQ was genetically determined, even though his data suggested otherwise. For example, he continually found a relationship between performance on the intelligence tests and the amount of schooling a recruit had had. Yet Yerkes did not conclude that schooling leads to increased scores; rather, he argued that men with more innate intelligence spend more time in school. When Blacks from the North did better on the tests than southern Whites, he did not conclude that the result had to do with better access to education in the North (where education funding was much higher than in the South)—instead he argued that only the most intelligent Blacks had managed to move North. When immigrant populations did better on the tests the longer they had been in the country, he and other hereditarians did not conclude that this was the result of new learning, but that the more recent immigrants (largely from southern and eastern Europe) came from a more deficient gene pool than those who had come earlier (primarily English and northern European immigrants).¹⁷

The Army data, combined with ethnocentrism, resulted in the 1924 Restriction Act to limit immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Today we can see that the "hereditarian bias" of Terman, Goddard, Yerkes, and others blinded these researchers to interpretations of their data that made more sense than the ones they relied upon.

Today, most researchers acknowledge that heredity is one factor influencing intelligence—just as heredity influences height. But environmental factors like poor nutrition ultimately impact how tall you are (whatever your genetic makeup). It seems obvious that intelligence, which is even more multiply determined than a characteristic like height, is also impacted by environmental influences both in and out of school. Most psychologists today certainly believe this to be the case. And yet the influence of Goddard, Tetman, and Yerkes—eminent psychologists in their day—continues to be felt today in the assumptions that most people make about what it is that intelligence tests are measuring, and the role of heredity in determining school success.

Hereditarian assumptions are only one problem with the American understanding of intelligence. Reification is another—the idea that test scores represent a single thing in the head called "general intelligence" that can be measured by a single number. With the invention of factor analysis (a statistical procedure) in 1904 by Charles Spearman, "g" (general intelligence) was born. By taking multiple scores and manipulating them mathematically through the process known as factor analysis, you can get a single number that expresses a relationship (correlation) between the scores used. That number is called a factor. A factor is not a thing or a cause, it is a mathematical abstraction. And it is not the only mathematical conclusion possible, it is only one of the ways one might analyze data. Spearman, however, was convinced that through this process of factor analysis he had identified a single, measurable entity called intelligence.¹⁸

Spearman's "g" was an important cornerstone in the arguments of the hereditarians. In 1937 Sir Cyril Burt, the official psychologist of the London public schools, joined the two concepts when he wrote, "This general intellectual factor, central and all-pervading, shows a further characteristic, also disclosed by testing and statistics. It appears to be inherited, or at least inborn. Neither knowledge nor practice, neither interest nor industry, will avail to increase it."¹⁹ Burt's name is an important one in this story, because he published influential studies of identical twins raised apart. If intelligence is determined by heredity rather than environment, then identical twins raised in different environments should still have very similar IQ scores.

Burt provided data that demonstrated just that. However, after his death in 1976, it was discovered that, in one of the great intellectual hoaxes of the century, *Burt had fabricated his data*—it was totally unreliable. His fabrications are now believed to have begun in the 1940s, after his real data was destroyed during the London blitz. However, Gould, in his in-depth review of Burt's scholarly writing, concludes that Burt's work was flawed from the onset because of his inability to view his own data with reasonable objectivity. "Burt's hereditarian argument had no foundation in his empirical work (either honest or fraudulent)... it represented an a priori bias, imposed upon the studies that supposedly proved it. It also acted, through Burt's zealous pursuit of his *idée fixe*, as a distorter of

judgment and finally as an incitement to fraud."²⁰ But the fraud went undiscovered until after his death, and Burt was still publishing his articles in prestigious psychological journals as late as 1972.

Heir to Burt's flawed intellectual legacy, Arthur Jensen wrote a controversial article published in 1969 in the *Harvard Educational Review*, in which he argued against compensatory education programs like Head Start, claiming that IQ was an inherited, fixed ability, unable to be changed by early intervention.²¹ Jensen based most of his argument on Burt's data, the same data that was later discredited. A generation later, in 1994, Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray published *The Bell Curve*, making essentially the same arguments that Jensen made, rooted in the intellectual history of Goddard, Terman, and Yerkes.²²

What do all of these scholars have in common, besides what we might call "bad science"? The first group was working in the early 1920s, at the height of an influx of immigrants who were different from the Anglo-Saxon Protestants who had preceded them, many of whom were politically radical and supportive of labor unions.²³ Jensen was writing at the height of the civil rights movement. *The Bell Curve* authors published their book during a time of economic slowdown, concern about jobs, and growing unease among many White people about affirmative action policies. All represent a backlash against progressive movements—essentially arguing for support of the status quo, using a hereditarian argument. In essence, they argue, why change social and educational policies if the outcome is ultimately determined by our biology?

What alternatives are there to these problematic views of intelligence? The psychologist Howard Gardner is well known for his views of multiple intelligences (not just a single g factor).²⁴ But even before Gardner, there was Jean Piaget, the Swiss developmental psychologist who defined intelligence as an ongoing process of adaptation, not a fixed trait. Piaget understood intelligence as cognitive capacity that develops as a result of individuals' active engagement with their environment, capacity that gets more complex over time as the result of individual experience.²⁵ This idea is echoed in the work of Jeff Howard, who talks about "smart" as something someone becomes through effective effort, not an unchanging characteristic.²⁶

It is worth reviewing the history of notions of intelligence in our effort to connect the dots of race and achievement, because I think it essential to understand both how deeply embedded a scientifically suspect idea is in our American system of education, and how inherently rooted in the racism of the eugenics movement it is.

Combine this with the long tradition of stereotypical representations of Black and Latino people in popular culture as either stupid, lazy, dangerous, hypersexual, or all of those things combined, and we have a situation in which it is very likely that Black and Latino children will enter school situations in which they are disadvantaged from the beginning by a teacher's lowered expectations as compared to those he or she may have for the White students in the class.

This is a crucial point. I am not saying that most or many teachers are actively, consciously racist in their belief system (though of course some are). But we are all products of our culture and its history. Regardless of our own racial or ethnic backgrounds, we have all been exposed to racial stereotypes and flawed educational psychology, and unless we are consciously working to counter their influence on our behavior, it is likely that they will shape (subtly perhaps) our interactions with those who have been so stereotyped. To prevent this outcome, we need active intervention in the form of antiracist education and professional development.

The importance of teacher expectations should not be underestimated. Many readers will be familiar with the classic study conducted by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, testing the impact of teacher expectations on student performance.²⁷ All of the children in the study were administered a nonverbal test of intelligence, which was disguised as a test that would predict intellectual development, or "blooming."

Approximately 20 percent of the children were chosen at random to form the experimental group. The teachers of these children were told that their scores on the test indicated that they would show surprising gains in intellectual competence during the next eight months of school. The only difference between the children in the experimental group and those in the control group was what their teachers had been told about them. At the end of the school year, eight months later, all of the children were retested with the same nonverbal measure. Overall, the children who had been identified as bloomers had done just that. They showed a significantly greater gain, known as the Pygmalion effect, than did the children of the control group. The children had risen to meet the expectations of the teacher.²⁸

This study, and variations of it, have been replicated many times since it was first conducted in 1966, and researchers, now convinced of the power of expectations, have shifted their focus to how the teacher's expectation is communicated. One finding that has emerged is that teachers appear to teach more content and to teach it with more warmth of affect to children for whom they have high expectations.²⁹

A teacher's affect and expectations can be communicated in many ways. In an interview I conducted as part of a research project on identity development among Black college students, a young Black woman taking an introductory science course at a prestigious, predominantly White institution reported her effort to seek extra help after doing poorly on an exam. When she appeared at the professor's office door during his stated office hours, he was meeting with a young White man, in what appeared to her to be a friendly and helpful conversation. She waited her turn outside his door, but when she entered his office and began to explain her confusion, he replied, "I can't help you." What did he mean? Was he saying, "I can't help you now, this is an inconvenient time," or did he mean, "I can't help you, you are beyond my help"? While either interpretation is a possibility, the student read his tone of voice and body language as dismissive, in contrast to what she had observed with the student before her, and interpreted his statement to mean the latter. She left his office, hurt and disappointed, only to continue to flounder in his course.

The message does not have to be so directly communicated to have a negative impact. Everyday interactions send an important message as well. Does the teacher offer a genuine smile when you enter the room? Does he or she greet you by name (and make the effort to pronounce it correctly)? Do you get called on in class when you raise your hand? If you offer a wrong or incomplete answer, does the teacher prompt you to try again or expand your response?

When my children were growing up, we would often visit local museums and attend the interactive demonstrations designed for children. When the museum staff person would ask the gathered group of children a question, my oldest son would always raise his hand energetically to reply. Inevitably, someone else, almost always a White child, would be called on. While I realize that the small number of Black children typically present in the crowd meant that the odds were always in favor of a White child being called on, what was disheartening to me was my observation that after a while my son stopped raising his hand. What was an occasional experience at the museum for him is a daily experience for some children in classrooms where teacher behavior may be influenced by unexamined biases. Creating an opportunity to examine such biases through professional development can lead to changes in these everyday behaviors.

For example, after participating in a semester-long antiracist professional development course I developed, in which teachers were actively encouraged to examine their own racial socialization and the ways in which stereotypes impacted their classroom practice, the educators involved, most of whom were White, reported new actions they had taken to reach out to students of color and engage their parents in the learning process, often for the first time.³⁰ One such educator offered this example:

My thinking throughout this course... prompted me to call Dwight at home one night just to see if he was doing his homework and to let him know that I was thinking about him and wondering if he needed help on the math problems. He was shocked that I called but I could tell that he was pleased to get the special treatment. Dwight has been a different student since that phone call. Things are far from perfect, but in general he's doing much better.³¹

Reaching out to this student communicated in a new and tangible way this teacher's genuine concern and belief that her student was capable of succeeding.

Ironically, sometimes low expectations can be hidden behind an ostensibly positive response from a teacher, in the form of inflated grades. I recall a particular instance of working with an African American student when I was teaching at a predominantly White institution in New England. She was an older first-generation college student who had overcome many hardships to be in college. She was an enthusiastic participant in class discussion, who often made positive contributions to our dialogue. But when the student turned in a poorly written paper, I gave her a C on it. I knew she aspired to earn a PhD in psychology, and in my written feedback to her, I suggested that she work on her writing skills, not only to improve her performance in my class but to be better-prepared for graduate school. My intention was to encourage her, conveying both my own high

standard and my confidence in her capacity to improve her writing with assistance and effort.

Despite my good intentions, she was upset with me and came to talk to me about her grade and my comments. My suggestion that she needed help with her writing was especially unsettling for her. "I just did a paper for another class and got an A on it," she said. *How is that possible?* I thought to myself, given the quality of the writing I had seen. I knew the White male professor who had given her the A pretty well, and I felt comfortable enough in my relationship with him to call him up after the student left my office. I explained the situation and my puzzlement about the disparity in our grading of her written work. He agreed with my assessment that her writing skills were weak, but then elaborated on the many disadvantages she had overcome to be in college, and in conclusion said, "You know, she works really hard." He had in essence given her an A for effort.

As our conversation continued, he spoke candidly about his reluctance to penalize the student for the inadequacy of her segregated urban high school preparation, and his desire not to be perceived as racially biased in his grading. I talked to him about my perception of the inherent racism in his essentially condescending—though well intentioned—awarding of a high grade. If he ordinarily gave honest feedback to more-privileged White students, to deny a Black student similarly honest feedback was to disadvantage her further. I argued that without honest feedback or high standards, without the demand for excellence, this student would not be able to accomplish what she wanted to accomplish. His high grade was in a real way an expression of *low expectations*, revealing a lack of confidence in her capacity to improve her skills with focused effort.

I never told the student about my conversation with the other professor. But her writing in my class did start to show improvement. And she did eventually go on to graduate school. Neither the conversation with the student or the professor was particularly easy to have—but both were important to me. It felt necessary for me to convey my high expectations to my student, and as it turned out, also to my colleague. In the end, I think they both appreciated it.

Just as low expectations can prevent honest and constructive feedback in the face of poor performance, they can also prevent the recognition of excellent performance from those from which little has been expected. Consider the example of Gwendolyn Parker, a Harvard graduate and writer, who as a child loved to write poetry. When given the task of writing a poem for a class assignment in high school, she did her very best and expected to receive an A. Instead she received a C- and was brave enough to ask the teacher about the low grade. His response clearly conveyed his expectations: "There is no way that you could have written this poem I searched all weekend, looking for where you may have copied it from If I'd been able to find out where you plagiarized it from, I would have given you an F. But since I couldn't find it, you are lucky I gave you a C-."³²

The teacher was clearly angry, perhaps not just because he suspected cheating but because his assumptions of his student's intellectual inferiority were being so blatantly

challenged. Regrettably, Parker's recollection is not the only such account that I have heard. Throughout my teaching career in predominantly White institutions, Black students have shared examples of instances where their competence and integrity have been questioned when their schoolwork exceeded the expectations of their teachers. As with Goddard, Terman, Yerkes, and Burt, subjective bias prevented the teachers from making the correct interpretation of the data before them—the excellence of the work.

Commenting on Parker's experience and those of young people like her whose parents had migrated to the North to escape the Jim Crow segregation of the South, Theresa Perry wrote: "If in the South the struggle was for equal facilities, equal pay for teachers, classroom buildings, a local high school and materials, in the North the struggle would be against the assumption—no, the ideology—of Black children as intellectually inferior and against school assignments, assessments, and interactions based on this ideology."³³ Such an ideology was reinforced in the popular culture and, as we have seen, in the scholarly literature. No wonder it infused the schools. Without intentional activity to shift the paradigm, it is easily perpetuated from one generation of teachers to the next.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THREAT OF STEREOTYPES

Well-entrenched assumptions about intelligence and racial and ethnic stereotypes do not just influence teacher behavior. They also impact student behavior over the years of their schooling. Particularly during adolescence, students who have internalized the negative messages about their own group are at risk for manifesting those stereotypes in school when they begin actively trying to define their own sense of racial/ethnic identity. Some African American students may have come to believe that high academic achievement in school is territory reserved for White students. Certainly the curriculum, devoid of Black role models, and the demographics of the tracking pattern in many schools, heavily skewed in favor of White students, would support that conclusion. Some African American students may actively choose to distance themselves from "White" behaviors, meanwhile embracing "Black" behaviors as defined by the popular culture as an expression of "authentic Blackness," for example, behaviors that may run counter to school success. It should be noted that concern about "acting White" is not a universal phenomenon among Black adolescents. However, in those environments where it seems common, one must ask what factors have led to the internalization of those beliefs among Black students. Perry poses the essence of this question: "What are the institutional formations and ideologies of teachers and schools that construct and reproduce these beliefs about schooling?"³⁴ It is a question that every teacher and administrator who has heard the phrase "acting White" used by Black children must ask.

The social psychologist Claude Steele and his colleagues have identified another way that awareness of the assumption of intellectual inferiority can impact Black students, and that is the phenomenon of "stereotype threat." As defined by Steele, stereotype threat is "the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype."³⁵ The studies that demonstrate this effect are elegantly designed and convincingly clear. For example, in one of their experiments, the researchers recruited high-achieving Black and White

students from Stanford University, most of whom were sophomores, and matched them according to their incoming SAT scores. The Black students and the White students had presumably similar capabilities, based on similar SAT performance.

Then the researchers put these students into an inherently stressful testing situation. They gave them a challenging thirty-minute section from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) subject test in English literature, typically taken by college seniors applying to graduate school, and told them they were testing verbal ability. When the students' scores were compared, what the researchers found was that, under this high-pressure test-taking circumstance, where all the students were in a way being pushed beyond their current levels of achievement, the White students at Stanford on average outperformed the Black students, even when they were evenly matched for SAT scores coming in. There was a performance gap, but why?

Steele and his colleagues hypothesized that when high-performing, high-achieving Black students who are very invested in doing well in school are put in a high-pressure test-taking situation, where intellectual ability is believed to be relevant to the task, they are likely to experience performance anxiety associated with stereotype threat—*anxiety that might suppress the students' performance*. To test the hypothesis, the researchers manipulated the experimental design in a variety of ways. In the first example described above, a key condition in the experiment was the fact that they had introduced the test as "diagnostic" of the students' intellectual ability. Under this condition a statistically significant performance gap resulted between Black and White student performance. However, when they gave the test with a different set of instructions—*instructions that explicitly stated that the test was not a measure of intellectual ability but simply a laboratory task used to study approaches to problem solving—the difference in Black student performance was dramatic*. In the "diagnostic" version of the experiment, Black students performed one full standard deviation below the White students. In the "nondiagnostic" version, Black and White students performed equally well. The racial stereotypes about Black academic performance were made irrelevant by reframing the test and the task in this simple way. Even though the same difficult test questions were used in both versions of the experiment, in the nondiagnostic version, the performance anxiety was reduced and the performance improved.³⁶

Steele and other researchers have replicated these results over and over, in a variety of contexts, and found the same effect in other domains. For example, Steele, Steven Spencer, and Diane Quinn demonstrated that stereotype threat lowers the performance of talented female math students on a challenging math test, but when the same test was presented as one on which men and women were expected to perform equally well (thereby reducing the threat of a gendered stereotype about women's performance), the women did indeed perform as well as the men on the difficult test and significantly better than the women in the "stereotype still relevant" test condition.³⁷

Steele and his colleagues hypothesized that when equally prepared Black students failed to do as well as their White counterparts in the same room, they were thinking about their racial group membership and the associated stigma, and such thoughts were at the root of

the performance anxiety. To test this idea, a new variation was introduced to the experiments. Researchers asked students to complete eighty "fill in the blank" word items just before they were given the challenging test items. Each of the words on the list had two letters missing.

Some of the words had been pre-tested by the researchers and they knew that they could be completed to form "stereotype-relevant" words. For example, a student thinking about racial stereotypes might quickly fill in the missing letters for "__ce" to spell "race" rather than "face" or "rice" or some other choice. Steele and his colleagues found that indeed the Black students wrote stereotype-related words more often than the White students, suggesting that race was on their minds before they took the test. This effect was particularly strong when students had been told that they were about to take a test measuring their intellectual ability. Black students in this diagnostic version listed more stereotype-relevant words than Black students who had received the nondiagnostic instructions prior to taking the test. The instructions did not seem to make a difference for White students, who made few stereotype-related word completions in either case.³⁸

How does stereotype threat impede test-taking performance for Black students? In some of the experiments, computers were used to administer the tests, which allowed the researchers to study the test-taking behavior of the students in some detail. Steele writes, "Black students taking the test under stereotype threat seemed to be trying too hard rather than not hard enough. They reread the questions, reread the multiple choices, rechecked their answers, more than when they were not under stereotype threat. The threat made them inefficient on a test that, like most standardized tests, is set up so that thinking long often means thinking wrong, especially on difficult items like the ones we used."³⁹

One of the most interesting variations of this series of experiments has fascinating practical implications. In this experimental scenario, researchers asked one group of students to check off a box indicating racial-group membership before they took the test. In another version, every other condition was kept the same, except that the researchers omitted those boxes. Black students who had no box to check were more likely to perform at the same level as White students than those Black students who were asked to indicate their race by checking a box at the beginning. Presumably, the act of asking students to identify their race before the test began was sufficient to trigger the performance anxiety of stereotype threat and suppress the performance of the Black students participating in the experiment.

Of course, checking boxes is currently a routine part of the experience of taking standardized tests like the SAT. The gap in performance between Black and White students on such tests is common knowledge and routinely discussed in the national media. If the box checking suppressed African American student performance in the laboratory among high-achieving Stanford students, is it possible that the same thing happens in real-life test-taking situations? Why not offer the tests without asking for racially identifying information, or if such information is needed for data-collection purposes, wait until after the test is over to collect it—perhaps placing the demographic questions at the end? (I have made this suggestion to a colleague I know at the

Educational Testing Service, the publisher of the SAT and similar tests, but I haven't seen any movement in that direction.)

According to the work of Steele and Geoffrey L. Cohen and their associates, stereotype threat is most likely to impact high-achieving students who are highly identified with school. The dilemma may be particularly acute when students feel uncertain about their own ability or belonging. Many students experience this kind of uncertainty during their first year of college, so stigmatized students entering a new academic environment are particularly vulnerable to stereotype threat. Stigmatized students must face the threatening possibility that should their performance be inadequate, their failure will only underscore the racial stereotype of alleged intellectual inferiority.⁴⁰

What does stereotype threat sound like in the real world, outside the experimental laboratory? Listen to these quotes from focus groups with first-year students of color at a predominantly White college, collected as part of a project I designed to assess intellectual engagement in that environment. Said one:

Sometimes you wonder because you are a woman of color, or a person of color, if someone treats you a certain way, is it because of what your race is or is it something else? You don't know. You have this other factor that other people don't have, and you're wondering did she act that way towards me because I'm Black or did she act this way toward me for another reason?

Another talked about the burden of representing her entire group:

I have an increased sense of responsibility here not to fail, not to, I don't know, just to represent myself as being a proper young lady, maybe more because I'm in a White atmosphere where most people here haven't met another Black person unless they were on the television, and you have to project, I don't know, just a certain amount of respect for yourself.

The visibility of one's token status adds to the pressure:

[White students] don't realize that they don't have to think about being White all the time, but in situations, you have to think about being the only Black one, like in your class, and your professor is going to know that you skipped class [everyone laughs]. They always know YOUR name.

Said another:

I don't know if it's self-imposed, but I always feel like I have to prove that I'm not here because of affirmative action. Like I always feel that I have to speak up in class, that I have to make myself visible to make sure that the professor knows that I am doing my work, that I know what is going on, that I have some creative intelligence. I feel like I constantly have to get the best grade in the class for me to feel better, and just prove myself maybe even to the White students who may be looking at me going, "Oh, she got here because of affirmative action."

The pressure not to prove the stereotype of intellectual inferiority means one cannot reveal weakness, or ask for assistance, even when justified in doing so, as this young woman explained:

I felt a lot of pressure too, never to ask for an extension. I wanted to be this superwoman where I never had a conflict in a schedule or I never got sick, or any of those normal things, and the first time that I did [ask for an extension], I felt really kind of bad about it.

Another added:

I thought I would be confident in my academic work, but I've really struggled with feeling comfortable going to my professors and getting the help that I need.

What is hopeful about our new understanding of stereotype threat and related theories is that they can guide us to change how we teach and what we say. As Steele puts it: "Although stereotypes held by the larger society may be hard to change, it is possible to create educational niches in which negative stereotypes are not felt to apply-and which permit a sense of trust that would otherwise be difficult to sustain."⁴¹ Receiving honest feedback that you can trust as unbiased is critical to reducing stereotype threat and improving academic performance. How you establish that trust with the possibility of stereotype swirling around is the question. The key to doing this seems to be found in clearly communicating both high standards and assurance of belief in the student's capacity to reach those standards.

Again the work of Steele and Cohen offers important insights. To investigate how a teacher might gain the trust of a student when giving feedback across racial lines, they created a scenario in which Black and White Stanford University students were asked to write essays about a favorite teacher. The students were told that the essays would be considered for publication in a journal about teaching, and that they would receive feedback from a reviewer who they were led to believe was White. A Polaroid snapshot was taken of each student and attached to the essay as it was turned in, signaling to the students that the reviewer would be able to identify the race of the essay writer. Several days later the students returned to receive the reviewer's comments, with the opportunity to "revise and resubmit" the essay. What was varied in the experiment was how the feedback was delivered.

When the feedback was given in a constructive but critical manner, Black students were more suspicious than White students that the feedback was racially biased, and consequently, the Black students were less likely than the White students to rewrite the essay for further consideration. The same was true when the critical feedback was buffered by an opening statement praising the essay, such as, "There were many good things about your essay." However, when the feedback was introduced by a statement that conveyed a high standard (reminding the writer that the essay had to be of publishable quality) and high expectations (assuring the student of the reviewer's belief that with effort and attention to the feedback, the standard could be met), the Black

students not only responded positively by revising the essays and resubmitting them, but they did so at a higher rate than the White students in the study.⁴²

The particular combination of the explicit communication of high standards and the demonstrated assurance of the teacher's belief in the student's ability to succeed (as evidenced by the effort to provide detailed, constructive feedback) was a powerful intervention for Black students. Describing this two-pronged approach as "wise criticism," Cohen and Steele demonstrated that it was an exceedingly effective way to generate the trust needed to motivate Black students to make their best effort. Even though the criticism indicated that a major revision of the essay would be required to achieve the publication standard, Black students who received "wise criticism" felt ready to take on the challenge, and did. Indeed, "they were more motivated than any other group of students in the study—as if this combination of high standards and assurance was like water on parched land, a much needed but seldom received balm."⁴³

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: WHAT CAN WE DO?

What, then, are the practical implications of Steele and his colleagues' research? What are some specific strategies for teachers, mentors, and other adults to consider in an effort to reduce stereotype threat and increase trust in cross-racial interactions?

1. Make standards for evaluation explicit. Establish high standards and make clear to students what the criteria are for meeting them. When standards are made explicit, students are more likely to trust and respond to relevant criticism. Emphasize "effective effort" as the key to success, rather than "innate ability."
2. Avoid overpraising for mediocre work. Students will perceive this as a sign of lowered expectations, and another reason not to trust the feedback.
3. Normalize help-seeking behaviors. For example, if all students are required to meet with the professor early in the semester or after the first exam, any stigma that students of color might feel seeking help outside of class is reduced.
4. When possible, include diversity of perspectives. Racial and cultural inclusivity in the curriculum and the-teaching materials will communicate to the student that members of her group are valued and may increase the student's sense of trust.
5. Encourage cross-group interaction in class. Consider assigning working groups rather than allowing students to choose group members themselves. Fostering interaction across racial lines or other lines of difference helps reduce stereotyping among classmates and increases the climate of trust in the classroom. However, clustering students of color within small groups is preferable to "tokenizing" them (placing no more than one student of color per group).
6. Revise your view of intelligence. Indeed, educators can revise their view of intelligence as an innate fixed capacity and can challenge those well-ingrained societal notions of racial hierarchies of intellectual ability. Students, too, can

reevaluate their own assumptions about intelligence—not just other people's intelligence but their own as well.

Many students, like many teachers, believe their intelligence (or lack of it) is a fixed, unchanging characteristic. Years of family members, friends, and teachers remarking, "What a smart boy/girl you are!" certainly reinforces this personal theory of intelligence. The alternate view of intelligence as changeable—as something that can be developed—is less commonly fostered, but can be. The educator Verna Ford has summed up this alternate theory for use with young children quite succinctly: "Think you can—work hard—get smart."⁴⁴ Research by the educational psychologist Carol Dweck suggests that those young people who hold a belief in fixed intelligence see academic setbacks as an indicator of limited ability. They are highly invested in appearing smart, and consequently avoid those tasks that might suggest otherwise. Rather than exerting more effort to improve their performance, they are likely to conclude, "I'm not good at that subject" and move on to something else. Students who have the view of intelligence as malleable are more likely to respond to academic setbacks as a sign that more effort is needed, and then exert that effort. They are more likely to face challenges head-on rather than avoid them in an effort to preserve a fixed definition of oneself as "smart."⁴⁵ The theory of intelligence as malleable—something that expands as the result of effective effort—fosters an academic resilience that serves its believers well.

The researchers Joshua Aronson, Carrie Fried, and Catherine Good wondered if a personal theory of intelligence as malleable might foster a beneficial academic resilience for students of color vulnerable to stereotype threat. Specifically, they speculated that if Black students believed that their intellectual capacity was not fixed but expandable through their own effort, the negative stereotypes that others hold about their intellectual ability might be less damaging to their academic performance. To introduce this alternative view of intelligence, they designed a study in which Black and White college students were recruited to serve as pen-pal mentors to disadvantaged elementary school students. The task of the college students was to write letters of encouragement to their young mentees, urging them to do their best in school. However, one group of college students was instructed to tell their mentees to think of intelligence as something that was expandable through effort, and in preparation for writing the letters, they were given compelling information, drawn from contemporary research in psychology and neuroscience, about how the brain itself could be modified and expanded by new learning. The real subjects of the study, however, were the college students, not their pen pals. Although the letter writing was done in a single session, the college students exposed to the malleable theory of intelligence seemed to benefit from exposure to the new paradigm. Both Black and White students who learned about the malleability of intelligence improved their grades more than did students who did not receive this information. The benefit was even more striking for Black students, who reported enjoying academics more, saw academics as more important, and had significantly higher grades at the end of the academic quarter than those Black students who had not been exposed to this brief but powerful intervention.⁴⁶

What worked with college students also worked with seventh graders. Lisa Sorich Blackwell, Kali Trzesniewski, and Carol Dweck created an opportunity for some seventh-grade students in New York City to read and discuss a scientific article about how intelligence develops, and its malleability. A comparable group of seventh-grade students did not learn this information, but read about memory and mnemonic strategies instead. Those students who learned about the malleability of intelligence subsequently demonstrated higher academic motivation, better academic behavior, and higher grades in mathematics than those who had learned about memory. Interestingly, girls, who have been shown by Steele and his colleagues to be vulnerable to gender stereotypes about math performance, did equal to or better than boys in math following the "intelligence is malleable" intervention, while girls in the other group performed well below the boys in math. As was the case with the Aronson, Fried, and Good study, the intervention with the seventh graders was quite brief—in this case only three hours—yet the impact was significant.⁴⁷ Embracing a theory of intelligence as something that can develop—that can be expanded through effective effort—is something that all of us can do to counteract the legacy of scientific racism, reduce the impact of stereotype threat, and increase the achievement of all of our students.

BREAKING THE SILENCE ABOUT RACE

I have shown how the dynamics of race—in a society in which racist ideology is still deeply embedded, though not always apparent—can affect the achievement of students of color. Cohen and Steele's work on effective feedback, and the other research discussed above, points to the possibility of counteracting the effects of racial stereotypes. But how can we develop these and other strategies if we are not able to talk freely about the continuing effects of racism? How can we overcome the unconscious impact of internalized stereotypes if we are not able to bring them to consciousness through dialogue? This dialogue among adults is important of course not just for the academic performance of students of color, but also for the effective preparation of all of our students who will live in an increasingly multiracial, multiethnic world.

Students look to their teachers for guidance and help for living in an increasingly diverse and complex society, and educators are becoming more aware of the need to prepare their students to live in a multiracial society. Yet this is a world with which the current teaching force has limited experience. Most teachers in the United States are White teachers who were raised and educated in predominantly White communities. Their knowledge of communities of color and their cultures is typically quite limited. One way to address this deficiency in teachers' experiences is to provide them with antiracist, multicultural education courses or programs.

The project that I will describe here briefly attempted to do just that. A two-year demonstration project, funded by the Carnegie Corporation, investigated the combined effect of interventions involving teachers, students, and parents in a small northeastern school district with an increasing school population of color (presently 24 Percent).⁴⁸ Although the project had three components, an after-school cultural identity group program for middle school students, a series of parent outreach workshops, and a

professional development course for educators, it is the professional development initiative that will be the focus of discussion here.

The initiative consisted of a professional development course that required participants (twenty-four teachers/semester) to examine closely their own sense of racial identity and their attitudes toward other groups as well as develop effective antiracist curricula and educational practices that are affirming of student identities and that support positive achievement for all students. It was assumed that teachers must look at their own racial identity in order to be able to support the positive development of their students' racial/ethnic identities. They must also be able to engage in racial dialogue themselves in order to facilitate student conversation.

The professional development course, *Effective AntiRacist Classroom Practices for All Students*, was specifically designed to help educators recognize the personal, cultural, and institutional manifestations of racism and to become more proactive in response to racism within their school settings.⁴⁹ Topics covered included an examination of the concepts of prejudice, racism, White privilege, and internalized oppression. In addition, theories of racial identity development for both Whites and people of color were discussed, along with an investigation of the historical connection between scientific racism, intelligence testing, and assumptions about the "fixed nature" of student intellectual capacity. The implications of these ideas for classroom practice were explicitly discussed. Course activities included lectures, videos, small and large group discussions, and exercises. Between class meetings, participants wrote short reflection papers in response to the assigned readings, and engaged in topical assignments such as an analysis of cultural stereotypes, omissions, and distortions in their curricular materials. They were also encouraged to actively examine their own expectations and assumptions about the academic potential of students of color. In all, eighty-three educators voluntarily participated in this demonstration project.

Eighty-five percent of the participants were White, and 15 percent were people of color (primarily Latino). Most of the Latino teachers were from a neighboring school district; they were offered slots in the course on a space-available basis. The teaching force of the district in which the project was based was 99.9 percent White. In two of the four semesters that the course was offered, the class was made up entirely of White participants. Sixty-two percent of the participants were elementary school classroom-teachers or specialists, 19 percent were working with high school students, and 13 percent were working at the middle school level. Five percent of the participants were district-level administrators. A veteran group of educators, the median number of years of experience was fourteen.

As part of the course requirement, participants were asked to develop an "action plan," as a way of applying what they learned in the course to their own school context. In order to assess the impact of the course on the teachers' role as agents of change, the action plans produced were categorized in terms of their ability to effect change in three areas of schooling: relationships among school and community members, the curriculum, and the institution's efforts regarding support services for students of color.⁵⁰ In all, fifty-nine

action plans were analyzed.⁵¹ While some plans were just that, plans that had not yet been acted on, most could be considered "works in progress"; the educators had already initiated steps in their proposed action.

Fifty-six percent of the plans involved some effort to make the curriculum more inclusive of people of color. Demonstrating a common beginning step for educators just starting to think about antiracist education, several of the plans involved developing bibliographies and purchasing multicultural books and other classroom materials. While this may seem like a rather inconsequential action, it can have significant impact. For example, one teacher's action plan defined the problem as the "one size fits all" curriculum that was being mandated at the state level. She wrote,

The problem is the absence of multicultural book titles in themes pertaining to Massachusetts Frameworks. When a unit is studied everyone reads the same book. This is good in the beginning to explain and teach all aspects of the novel; plot, characters, setting. But once students are aware of the parts, they do not all need to read the same novel. It is important that they read novels that reflect their own sex/culture/religion based on their reading ability.

Her plan, already under way, was to "make a list of multicultural novels, with varied reading, and interest levels, for each theme in grade eight English class with Massachusetts Frameworks notation, and persuade the eighth-grade teachers to use them." She had learned in the course about the importance of affirming the identities of her students, so that they could see themselves reflected in the classroom and feel included in the learning process rather than on the margins of it, and she was determined to put that new understanding into action, not just in her own classroom but throughout the school. Thirty percent of the action plans highlighted antiracist educational practices at the interpersonal level, focusing on relationships between teachers and students or teachers and parents. Given that most of the course participants were classroom teachers, and the course content specifically addressed raising expectations for students of color, it was not surprising that teachers who wanted to effect change often chose to do so by focusing on particular students. Eight of the action plans specifically dealt with communicating high expectations to students of color. A powerful example of one of these plans was provided by a young White teacher who was trying to help a Puerto Rican girl who had already failed her class twice. She wrote:

I was even hesitant about calling home to her parents. I am ashamed to admit that my first year with [Ana] I made a lot of mistakes. I assumed her lower ability was due to lack of initiative. Maybe she had a terrible home life, which prevented her from getting things done outside of school. Rather than actually investigating my assumptions I spent the semester taking it easy on her. I thought I was being compassionate and caring, but in reality I was sending a negative message, that not completing her assignments was okay.

When I first started teaching I had a really difficult class with several minorities. I had discipline problems, so I discussed these issues with the principal. He gave me some suggestions, but what most stuck out was when he said, "Check with

me before you call some of these kids' parents." For some reason I felt fear or maybe intimidation from that statement.

... This semester I called home, I have never called home before. That made a big difference. She has a wonderful family, a hard-working family. Her parents are very concerned.... All of these false assumptions were based on the internalized stereotypical generalizations regarding people of color, which in fact clouded my judgment and ultimately undermined how I taught [Ana]. At the time I thought I was doing a good job, but now I realize she had been short-changed. This semester I am on her like glue to do her work.

Her student's performance changed dramatically—from failing grades to an A- average. In addition, her developing relationship with this Latina student helped her see more clearly the way racism was operating in the school, and she began to raise these issues in her class. She wrote in her closing reflection paper:

I have also made an effort to bring up social inequities in the school by setting aside time during class to discuss these issues. I give each student air time to voice his/her opinion. Although not math related sometimes the racial comments regarding experiences in school warrant these discussions. Students need to know that these issues are real and apparent within our school and in our community. Some know all too well from firsthand experience.

Although this young teacher was brave enough to raise these issues in her math class, taking action beyond the classroom was much less common for other educators who participated in the class. Perhaps actions that challenge institutional policies and practices were less frequent than the other types because such interventions seemed beyond the average teacher's sphere of influence and felt too risky. Despite the risks, however, two Latino teachers decided to do a comparative analysis of disciplinary actions taken against White and Latino students in their school. Their project was viewed with considerable suspicion by their principal, and in fact their results revealed a pattern of Puerto Rican students receiving longer punishments than other students. The teachers shared their findings with other Hispanic teachers in the school, but did not confront the principal. Instead they decided among themselves to develop alternate strategies for dealing with, discipline problems.

We organized a meeting with the Hispanic teachers and it was a very successful one. We presented the project concerning student discipline and we came up with the idea to have the student come after school to meet with the teacher before sending them to the office.

In another school, a White teacher shared her new sense of empowerment with her students to bring about institutional change.

As I thought about racism in our society, I began to think about what I could do in my classroom. How can I help to change things? And it seemed to me that all of my students needed to feel empowered. One of the things that happened was that kids couldn't stay for after-school activities because there was no after-school bus. So a class took on the project of lobbying for a bus. They did a

survey in the school and they spoke to the school council to present their findings. The final result was that we have a bus now for two days a week. Their study has also been used to apply for a grant for next year. This class experienced a real sense of empowerment. I hope this experience will encourage them to work constructively for change Recently two students said to me, "I don't understand why we don't have a Puerto Rican festival here at [school]. I said, "Well do you want one?" And they said, "Yeah, well, of course we want one." So I said I would help it happen. Since then, two girls started and planned a festival. It's become a real lesson in empowerment.

While the level of commitment and degree of initiative varied greatly across the action plans, it seemed clear that most of the educators emerged from the course with a heightened sense of both their responsibility and their power to address issues of inequity in the school, to become allies to the students of color in their school, and to be antiracist role models for all students. Such awareness can only be a step in the right direction for improving student performance. Perhaps the significance of the learning is best captured in the closing quote of this educator, a woman with thirty years of experience in public education.

As I write this action plan, I have to ask myself why I did not see the need for this or other services for children of color before taking this course. The only answer that I can think of is that I was insensitive to those needs and blind to the effects of racism that were all around me. The White privilege audit that we did and the school/classroom audit helped to bring those issues into focus for me. More than any course I have ever taken, this one has helped to open my eyes and shock me into taking some positive concrete steps toward combating racist attitudes in my daily life. I intend to continue the process of becoming more sensitive to the needs of students of color. I sincerely hope that we, as a school system, can capitalize on the momentum and energy generated by this course and build a truly multicultural environment for our students.

Did this demonstration project improve student performance district-wide, enough to close the achievement gap? I can't say that it did, because the project did not continue beyond the two years of funding, not long enough to see systemic change. We do know that *individual* students improved their performance in response to *individual* teachers' antiracist efforts.

I believe that this kind of antiracist professional development is extremely important in transforming practice, and that there should be more of it. Should it be mandatory? I am often asked this question. My response is based in my experience. The most effective work that I've done has been with educators who were participating voluntarily. And yet when we talk about voluntary audiences, people often say, "Well, you are just preaching to the choir." My response to that is always that the choir needs rehearsal!

It is hard to do this work, and gathering with others who are like-minded or who are focused on the same thing can in fact lead you to feel more empowered to do it. The educators who participated in the Massachusetts study went back to their classrooms, talked to their colleagues, and tried new strategies that they hadn't tried before. They had

gathered with other, similarly motivated folks with the result that—to continue with the choir analogy—they were learning to sing better. And when you sing well, you encourage other people to sing with you. I have always thought about this professional development work in this way: as gathering those who are interested and helping them to think about how to expand their own spheres of influence to bring about change through the ripple effect. Those educators who might never volunteer for such a course are inevitably influenced by the momentum generated by those working around them. And some of them learn by example that they might like to sing, too.

BEYOND INDIVIDUAL ACTION TO SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Singing in concert with others leads to a more powerful result than singing alone, and of course, change happens more quickly at the institutional level when the focus shifts from the individual to the systemic—to the policies and practices that cut across classrooms. In their recent book, *Courageous Conversations about Race*, Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton make the important point that "we must not mistake personal antiracist leadership for Systemic Equity Anti-Racism Transformation. Individuals and schools must be part of an entire community of courageous, passionate and mutually supportive leaders in the district."⁵² In order for system-wide change to take place, there must be leadership at the highest levels to support the examination of continuing educational inequities, especially when there is community resistance to doing so.

Singleton and Linton offer as a case example the Lemon Grove School District near San Diego, California, a district that has been engaged in a system-wide antiracist focus for five years. In 2001 Lemon Grove was one of the most diverse school districts in San Diego County, with 34 percent of its students Latino, 34 percent White, 22 percent African American, and 10 percent representing other groups of color. Like many districts, there was an achievement gap that fell along racial lines, and a history of racial tension. Disproportionate numbers of Latino and African American students scored in the lowest quartiles, and only a few were in the top quartile. In an effort to bring about change and close the achievement gap, in 2001 the superintendent, Dr. McLean King, released a vision statement emphasizing a system-wide focus on equity.⁵³ Like many districts, he identified the school mission as one of engaging and supporting "all students in achieving high academic standards." In his vision he advocated for "a culture that embraces diversity, respects all cultures, and ensures the development and implementation of educational programs that maximize academic achievement for all students regardless of race, color, or creed." While all of this was positive, it was not unusual. What set Dr. King's vision statement apart from others I have seen was his explicit mention of the role of race and the personal responsibility that all of the educators in his district had to engage in self-reflection. He said, "It is equally important that all school leaders are personally aware of the role race plays in perpetuating a system of bias, prejudice, and inequity. Such awareness and each individual's personal commitment are critical to the creation of a school environment that is free from racism." He concluded his vision statement with these words:

I charge the entire staff and educational community of the Lemon Grove School District to take risks by closely examining the role we each play in changing a system that has allowed this unacceptable achievement gap to emerge within this

district. All educators in Lemon Grove will make a personal commitment and be held professionally accountable for the achievement of this vision.

We have the capacity; however, we must have the will to make a difference!"

With that kind of clear and powerful leadership, it is not surprising that Lemon Grove is making significant progress toward its goal of closing the achievement gap. Historically a low-performing school district, in the five years that this effort has been under way, the district has consistently scored better than schools with similar demographics. Despite the fact that 65 percent of the students are economically disadvantaged (eligible for free or reduced lunch), 20 percent have limited English skills, and state funding per pupil is slightly below the state average, the district is making impressive gains. In 2004 Black students in five of the eight schools and Latino students in four of the eight schools improved at a rate greater than their White counterparts, suggesting that the racial achievement gap is closing rapidly. At the same time, all students are showing achievement gains. Singleton and Linton conclude, "The transformation occurring in the district follows our equity definition: Raise the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the highest and lowest performing students; and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories."⁵⁵

The case of Lemon Grove clearly illustrates that a commitment to breaking the silence about race at all levels of the educational system can indeed lead to improving performance for all students. We know what to do. We just have to have the courage and commitment to do it.

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1. See Chapter 1 in this volume.
 2. For an in-depth discussion of the origin of this idea in American educational psychology, see Stephen Jay Gould, "The Hereditarian Theory of I.Q.: An American Invention," in *The Mismeasure of Man*, rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 5996), 176-263.
 3. Jeff Howard, *Getting Smart: The Social Construction of Intelligence* (Waltham, Mass.: Efficacy Institute, 1992).
 4. See Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 178-88.
 5. *Ibid.*, 176-83.
 6. *Ibid.*, 188-89.
 7. *Ibid.*, 188-94.
 8. See Leila Zenderland, *Measuring Minds: Henry Herbert Goddard and the Origins of American Intelligence Testing* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 267-68.
 9. H. H. Goddard, "The Binet Tests as Related to Immigration," *Journal of Psycho-Athenics* 18 (1913), io5-7, as cited in Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 195.
 10. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 196.
 11. H. H. Goddard, "Mental Tests and the Immigrant," *Journal of Delinquency* 2 (1917), 271, as cited in Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 197.

12. H. H. Goddard, "Mental Tests and the Immigrant," *Journal of Delinquency* 2 (1928), 271, as cited in Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 198.
13. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 207.
14. Lewis M. Terman, *The Measurement of Intelligence* (Boston: Houghton Muffin, 1916).
15. *Ibid.*, 91-92.
16. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 224.
17. *Ibid.*, 247-51.
18. For a much more detailed understanding of factor analysis and its limitations as used by Charles Spearman, see Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, Chapter 6, 264-350.
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39. Claude Steele, "Stereotype Threat and African-American Student Achievement," in *Young, Gifted, and Black*, ed. Perry, Steele, and Hilliard, 121.
40. Geoffrey L. Cohen and Claude M. Steele, "A Barrier of Mistrust: How Negative Stereotypes Affect Cross-Race Mentoring," in *Improving Academic Achievement: Impact of Psychological Factors on Education*, ed. Joshua Aronson (San Diego: Academic, 2002), 303-28.
41. Steele, "Thin Ice," 51.
42. Steele. "Stereotype Threat," 126.
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44. As quoted in Howard, *Getting Smart*, 52.
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48. This initiative, "Improving Interethnic Relations among Youth: A School-Based Project Involving Educators, Parents, and Youth," was made possible with funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.
49. This course was developed and first offered in 1993 to suburban educators participating in the METCO program, a voluntary school-desegregation program in the Boston area. For more information about the development of this course, and its impact on those teachers, see Sandra M. Lawrence and Beverly Daniel Thrum, "Teachers in Transition: The Impact of Antiracist Professional Development on Classroom Practice," *Teachers College Record* 99, no. 1 (fall 1997), pp. 162-78.
50. This framework was adapted from the 1985 work of Enid Lee, *Letters to Marcia: A Teacher's Guide to Anti-Racist Education* (Toronto: Cross-Cultural Communication Centre).
51. Because participants sometimes work collaboratively in groups to develop the action plans, the total number of plans is smaller than the total number of participants.
52. Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin, 2006), 245.
53. Ibid., 247.
54. Ibid., 248.
55. Ibid., 252-53.
