

Minorities fall victim to achievement gap

Life



The studies do not ill and give proof that there is a problem occurring in American schools. A solution needs to be derived fast: and, a senior admissions officer at Harvard university believes he has a simple-? yet effective-? method to solve the problem. In the essay, " Paying Kids to Study? It's Not a Crazy Idea," David L Evans believes we should give incentives to minorities in order to motivate them to strive for academic greatness.

First, Evans explains that " Tiger Woods and Serena and Venus Williams" are at the top of their game and are minorities in their particular sport(11 Evans states that these athletes give minorities' a role model to look up to and a reason to feel good about being different. Tiger Woods and Serena and Venus Williams give students a reason to be leave in hard work and that perseverance pays off, explains Evans. When Woods and the Williams sisters win a match or tournament, they are rewarded with a trophy and/or money. Evans calls these incentives, which reward them for their hard work and dedication.

Therefore, Evans believes that all minority students should receive incentives like their favorite major athletes. Evans explains that we should do the same by giving " material rewards or monetary inducements to minority students as motivation to do well academically' (11). Further, Evans explains that this might seem like a crazy idea but that it is a very thought out plan. Evans explains that some of the most distinguished colleges have awarded student for their achievement. In the same manner, Evans explains that there are insurance businesses that have discounts for students with good grade.

Evans believes molesters should receive such incentives through individuals or groups that would give a couple hundred dollars away to students that have greatly improved their grades. Instead of money Evans says that students may receive " clothing, sneakers, invitations to fancy dinners tit famous personalities or chauffeur-driven limousines to proms could serve the same purpose" (11). To continue, Evans explains that even though there were many obstacles for Tiger and the Williams sisters to overcome, they still managed to Decode " emailed role models In a society Tanat Is In constant pursuit AT material rewards" (11).

To conclude, Evans states that we should recognize academic success and reward students with more than just the usual " pat on the back" (11). Even though, Evans' idea of giving rewards-? material or monetary-? to minority students is a great idea on paper, but fails when faced with the real world. Evans fails to see the consequences that could arise and he fails to realize that this will not work for every minority student, for everyone is different.

Evans should have thought howpeer pressurefrom " Acting White" really affects students, how moral values and material rewards do not mix, how damages intrinsic values and will not increase self-esteem, and howprofessional athletesas role models can increase academic difficulties. Furthermore, the achievement gap is the gap between minority students and non- minority students academically. As stated above, the achievement gap can be seen wrought " test scores, grades, drop-out andgraduationrates, and almost every relevant indicator of academic performance" (Encourage).

Although there are probably hundreds of contributing factors, some are family problems, low-incomes, social problems, and learning problems. Many researchers, reformers, and educators often use the achievement gap to compare the gap between White and African-American students, it is also used to compare the gap between Latino students. The achievement gap is also caused by students who have certain disadvantages and attend schools that are unable to understand their particular needs and only hurt them even more.

Another example that shows the achievement gap are the results of the 2006 California Standards Test, which showed that 60.3% of Whites, 29% of African-Americans, and 27.4% of Hispanics scored proficiency in English-Language Arts and 53% of Whites, 24.9% of African-Americans, and 29.8% of Hispanics scored proficiency in Math (O'Connell). Peer pressure in school can affect many aspects of a student's life and among them is academic achievement. As explained by Evans, "Acting White" is when an African-American student "stand[s] apart from the crowd" (11). "Acting White" by Roland G.

Fryer, an assistant professor of economics, explains that acting white can be characterized by the "academically inclined, but allegedly snobbish, minority students who were shunned by their peers" (53). What Fryer means that they are the minority students who excel in school? often the richer? and are separated from their peers because of all the pressure they receive for acting white. To be precise, Fryer explains that for this essay, acting white refers to "a set of social interactions in which minority adolescents

who get good grades in school enjoy less social popularity than white students who do well academically' (53).

Further, acting white " is most prevalent in racially integrated public schools," where there is a greater ratio of white to black (54). Fryer explains that there are many variations to the definition of what acting white is, but all show a similar " reference to situations where some minority adolescents ridicule their minority peers for engaging in behaviors perceived to be characteristics of whites" (54). Fryer also says that since " reading a book or getting good grades might be perceived as acting white that makes the topic a matter of national concern" (54).

As black students Gaps increase above a 3. Level, " they tend to have fewer and fewer friends" (56). Fryer found through his research that black students did not have the peer pressure of acting white when attending an all Dalai cocoons, out 010 when attending an Integrated cocoons. He also salsa TN African American students that went to a private school had more friends and more " cross-ethnic friendships" (58). In the essay, " The Significance of Race in the Racial Gap in Academic Achievement," Pedro A.

Encourage, a professor in the graduate School of Education at Harvard University, and Anti Oakum, a doctoral student in Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, explain that even when a minority student makes the particular requirements for advanced placement (AP), they will often decline the offer because they do not want to lose their friends. Further, Encourage and Oakum explain that this is also true with other things such as " the school band, newspaper, debating team or honors society. Acting white plays a

huge role in a students' peer group; they want to be in the popular group or the sports group and despite their parents words of advice they would rather listen to their peer group, which could lead them the wrong way. While Evans goes about his idea of giving rewards to minority students who show improvement in their academics, he makes the assumption that all minorities will participate. Although, incentives might sound good to an African- American student or Hipic student, it still does not erase the peer pressure students feel from their peers when they excel in school.

The feeling of being accepted in a group is greater than that of an education. In the essay " Money for Mortality [sic]," Mary Argues, a freelance writer living in Reading, PA, explains that rewards can damage the " virtues of honesty and kindness. " A reward is a gift; any gift should at least be met with the presumption of genuine gratitude on the part ofthe giver," explains Argues. To show how our society believes a good deed must end with a reward, Argues tells a story about a young boy who found an envelope full of money and returned it to its right-full owner.

When the boys school heard of his great deed, they persisted to say that some sort of reward was required and that they \$3 he received was cheap. To make things worse, the school presented him with a \$1 50 savings bond. Argues believes that his mined the boys sense of self-gratitude. When Argues' son came to her asking for \$10 for every A she said, [d]owing well is its own reward. The A Just confirms that. " Argues makes clear that she does praise her son but Just not with money or other incentives.

She explains that it is "not meant to reward or elicit future achievement, but rather to express my genuine delight in the satisfaction he feels at having done his best." Argues' main point is that rewards cause us to lose sight of our virtues, leaving us "incapable of feeling a genuine sense of inner peace." In the essay, "Studies Find Reward Often No Motivator," Life Cohn, a Cambridge, MA writer, explains that many people believe that "rewards promote better performance. Cohn explains that psychologists have "been finding that rewards can lower performance levels, especially when the performance involves creativity." "[T]he sense that something is worth doing for its own sake... Declines when someone is rewarded for doing it" (Cohn). Cohn said that when he studied a group of young children that were rewarded for drawing, they became less likely to draw by themselves than that of children who would draw because they enjoyed it.

Cohn explains two reasons why rewards hurt performance: first, "rewards encourage people to focus narrowly on a task, to do it as quickly as possible and to take few risks;" second, "people come to see themselves as being controlled by the reward." Evans fails to realize the difference between a reward and an award. A reward is "something given in return for something done" and an award is "given after being judged." Evans confuses the two when he is explaining how major athletes receive rewards when they win a game or a math or a tournament.

Argues and Cohn both see the effects rewards-? creativity and motivation-? can have on a child or a student. Argues sees it through every day things such as reading the newspaper; whereas, Cohn sees it through things such as research. Rewards can ultimately damage intrinsic values and will not

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increase self-esteem. Steven Rises, a professor of psychology at Ohio State University, explains intrinsic motivations as "doing something because you want to" and extrinsic motivations as "seeking a reward. Rises explains that money can be an effective motivator and so can grades, and that everyone is different, therefore, people will have different ways of being motivated. Rises continues to say that "some people are very curious and enjoy spending a great deal of time learning on their own," but there are also people that "don't enjoy learning for its own sake." Rises explains that many people might not be intrinsically motivated because of the "negative feelings they cause, such as performance anxiety. In the article "The Feel-good Trap," Richard Westbound believes that a student's ability to learn does not deal with rewards or acting white, but that they have no "confidence in their ability to learn" (12). Westbound explains that the self-esteem movement believes that "[r]aising their self-esteem would boost their achievement" (12). Westbound disagrees with the self-esteem movement and says "[s]elf-esteem has little or no impact on academic achievement, or on drug use, violence or any other serious problems (12). Even if schools were to raise students' self-esteem levels they would be unable to "manage humiliation or maturity" (12).

Westbound believes "too much unconditional praise produces not self-confidence but cynicism about adults and doubts about themselves" (12). Further, Westbound explains that while focusing on self-esteem "teachers dumb down curricula, inflate grades and avoid discussing real academic problems with parents" (13). Westbound believes schools need to drop the idea of self-esteem completely and "should instead set high expectations of

children, cultivate in them a wide range of competencies, coping strategies and ethical sensibilities, and show them the value of these abilities" (13).

Adults need " to spend more time with children" and not take the " short cut" by constantly praising children and giving them their " time and attention" that they so need and deserve. (13). Westbound believes parents should be more involved in school and help out more at home, in order to fix the achievement gap. On the opposite side, Evans believes rewards will motivate minority students because they will not themselves and that self-esteem issues will be resolved by rewards and improved academics.

In comparison, Rises believes that rewards work only for certain people; different people are motivated by different things. Also, Westbound believes that no reward or motivator will ever affect a student's self-esteem because the issue is set deep within the brain, which rewards will fail to fix. In the essay, " The Significance of Race in the Racial Gap in Academic Achievement," Encourage and Oakum see how looking up to major league athletes as role models can affect a student's attitudes towards school.

Encourage and Oakum explain that " many young people believe that they have a greater chance of becoming a mainly pop tinsplate or rap artist than an engineer, doctor or steward programmer. " Even though, the odds of being in a major league sport are very few, students will still set their lives primarily on sports not leaving adequate time for academics. Differing from Encourage and Oakum, Evans believes professional athletes would become the basis of all role models for minority students. Evans fails to realize that this could have major effects on a student's academic achievement.

To conclude, Evans makes a whole bunch of assumptions that were not supported by proper evidence. "Acting White" is much more than standing out in the crowd; it is about minority students feeling socially obligated to decline sports or academics, so they will not lose the friends they have. When a child is growing up they are learning at a rapid pace and then their moral values are screwed up by material rewards, hereford learning to become dependent on a reward in order to do something; once a student receives a reward for a good grade, they will not have the same feelings toward school as before.

Rewards can damage intrinsic values by giving people the perception that they can only complete or do something if they are rewarded for their efforts; further, self-esteem is not something that can be fixed by rewards, due to the fact that it requires much more. Lastly, professional athletes are not role models worth looking up to because they can only twist and tangle students attitudes towards school; they feel they have a better chance of making it in a major league sport than in any academically required profession.