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College-Readiness: The Current State of Affairs

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Academic Leadership Journal

Imagine a nation in which every student, from Boston to Houston, from Cleveland to Miami, from Chicago's South side to Compton, from a New Mexico Indian reservation to the Appalachian Mountains, characteristically graduates from high school prepared for postsecondary training (i.e., college, university, trade school, or workforce training). Further, imagine being able to say to every child "you will be provided with a high school that will educate you, challenge you, care for you, support you, and graduate you ready to compete and succeed in this world" (Balfanz & Letgers, 2004, p. 2).

The current realities of the proposed outcomes of Brown vs. the Board of Education and subsequent education legislation create a vastly different view of the educational panorama. Rather than the beautiful landscape, the bleak picture is that many students in the U.S. do not graduate and of those students who do graduate, most students are not prepared to participate fully in academic endeavors, the workforce, or civic life. According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), the primary avenue out of lasting poverty and dependence on social services in America is a quality high school education followed by some form of postsecondary schooling or training.

College-Readiness

The majority of high school graduates in the 21st century in the United States are not academically prepared for the rigor of postsecondary education or to enter the workforce (American College Test [ACT], 2009; Conley, 2007a, 2007b; Flippo & Caverly, 2009). In a national survey, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) reported that large numbers of the adult population over 15 years of age did not demonstrate the literacy and numeracy skills to be successful in postsecondary education or have the understanding of how to assimilate themselves into the complex, bureaucratic global society (Kirsch, Braun, Yamamoto, & Sum, 2007). In *Measuring College and Career Readiness: The Class of 2009*, the ACT reported that only 23% of the nation's 2009 graduating seniors were likely to be successful in entry-level credit-bearing courses at a college or university (ACT, 2009).

In an earlier policy report (ACT, 2006b), researchers revealed that approximately 50% of the students in the 2005 graduating class who took the ACT Test were not prepared for the rigors of college reading. More revealing is that the percentage of students showing college-readiness in reading steadily decreased from 1994 through 2005 (ACT, 2006b). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2004) reported that over 50% of students attending college had to enroll in a developmental math course. High school graduates entering the workforce need the same level of knowledge and skills as those persons planning for college, especially in reading and mathematics, to be hired for jobs that lead to self-sufficient career paths, to enter job training programs, or to enter the military (ACT, 2006a, 2008; National Association of Manufacturers, 2005).

According to Conley (2007a), college-readiness is "the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed-without remediation-in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program" (p. 5). Defined by ACT (2007), college-readiness is:

the level of preparation a student needs to be ready to enroll and succeed

without remediation-in a credit-bearing course at a two-year or four-year institution, trade school, or technical school...we have evidence that college readiness also means workforce readiness. (p. 5)

The necessity to be a responsible, self-regulated high school graduate prepared to enter college or the workforce has never been a more important, controversial issue than in the first decade of the new millennium (ACT, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2009; Conley, 2007a, 2007b; Greene & Winter, 2005; Raines, 2006; Ravitch, 2009, 2010). According to Dohm and Shniper (2007), 73% of the fastest growing career options projected between 2006 and 2016 will require some form of training beyond high school (e.g., apprenticeship, trade school, or college). Pugh, Pawan, and Antommarchi (2000) stated that it is realistic to say that the 21st century is bringing more to learn, more ways to learn, and more reasons to be an effective learner than ever before.

In short, self-regulated learning is the platform from which critical thinking, problem solving, and effective expression are launched (Bandura, 1986, 1993, 1997, 2001; Conley, 2007a, 2007b; Pajares, 2002; Young & Ley, 2002, 2003). High school graduates should have a repertoire of academic and socio-cognitive strategies they learned throughout their K-12 experiences both in and out of school (ACT, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2009; Conley, 2007a, 2007b; Raines, 2006). However, the vast majority of students are entering trade schools, community colleges, and universities without an understanding of the academic requirements or the personal commitment necessary to be successful at institutions of higher education (ACT, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Conley, 2007a, 2007b; Kuh, 2005; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Olson, 2006; Tinto, 1999, 2007). High school graduates entering the workforce or military may not be successful because they are overwhelmed with similar dilemmas (ACT, 2006a, 2006b, 2008; Boylan, 2003; Conley, 2007a, 2007b; Flippo & Caverly, 2009).

For many beginning postsecondary students, the use of academic strategies appears to be a relatively new concept because academic tasks in college vary markedly from the strategies students used in high school (Boylan, 2003; Conley, 2007a, 2007b; Flippo & Caverly, 2009; Kuh et al., 2006; Martin & Arendale, 1994; Nist & Simpson, 2000). First-year college students who are under-prepared are faced with daunting pressures, and those students who lack the confidence and erudition to acclimatize to diverse social and academic situations will have extreme difficulty transitioning themselves into the academic and cultural communities of postsecondary institutions (Bean & Eaton, 2002; Conley, 2007a, 2007b; El-Hindi, 2003; Kuh et al., 2006; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Seidman, 2005; Tinto 1999, 2007).

Students who are college-ready likely will be more academically adept and successful in postsecondary and workforce arenas than their counterparts who graduate with academic deficiencies (Cline, Bissell, Hafner, & Katz, 2007; Conley, 2007a, 2007b; Young & Ley, 2002, 2003). More importantly, college-ready graduates will more readily assimilate themselves into the complex, bureaucratic global society and be more likely to develop and perpetuate personal attributes (i.e., cultural, social, and economic capital) and become engaged citizens than students who are not college-ready (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1979; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Dougherty, Mellor, & Smith, 2006; Kirsch et al., 2007). Shortly before the turn of the century, high schools were placed under the microscope and examined through a more powerful lens. Although assessment and accountability guidelines for high schools were not specifically stated in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001),

it became apparent that high schools were not fulfilling their expectations of preparing students for postsecondary education, and as a consequence, redesign and reform initiatives were begun (Balfanz, 2009; Braun, Wang, Jenkins, & Weinbaum, 2006; Gray, 2005; Scott, 2007). Points of contention to invested stakeholders were: (a) high student dropout rates, (b) flat admissions test scores, (c) stable but wide achievement gap, (d) large numbers of students poorly prepared for college, and (e) 50% of students in developmental education classes in college (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

With college-readiness rates among high school graduates low and the high school dropout rate high, Balfanz (2009) questioned the viability of the American high school as the training ground for postsecondary education (i.e., college or workforce training) for all students stating that “it has perpetuated inequalities and often fallen short of its ideals” (Balfanz, 2009, p. 18). According to the NCES (2007), nationwide, slightly less than 30% of high school freshmen can read at grade level. Balfanz and Legters (2004) reported that approximately 1,200,000 high school students (i.e., roughly 7,000 per school day) drop out of school every year. Further, the majority of the aforementioned students were lower-socioeconomic Black and Hispanic students who were victims of some 2000 urban schools in major cities throughout the U.S. known as dropout factories (Balfanz, 2009). Over 42% of freshmen entering community colleges and 20% of freshmen students enrolling in public 4-year universities were required to enroll in one or more developmental math, reading, or writing courses (NCES, 2004). According to the National Association of Manufacturers (2005), approximately 60% of U.S. manufacturing companies surveyed reported that high school graduates were not adequately prepared for entry-level jobs.

Demographic Changes

Over 11 million Hispanic students are enrolled in public schools nationwide (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). Also, the Hispanic student population in the U.S. is predicted to increase 166% by the year 2050, increasing from 11 million in 2006 to 28 million in the target year (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). If this growth rate occurs, Hispanic children will be the majority population enrolled in publically funded schools by 2050 (Fry & Gonzales, 2008).

Presently, Hispanic students account for approximately 20% of public school enrollments nationally (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). By the year 2040, Hispanics will be the majority ethnic group in publicly funded schools in Texas (Murdock, 2007). With 2000 being the base year and 2040 being the target year, it is logical that the ethnic composition of publically funded schools would change drastically given the migration rates of legal and illegal immigrants to Texas.

To corroborate Murdock’s (2007) predictions, student statistics from the Houston Independent School District (HISD) (2010) revealed that of the 200,225 students on 296 campuses, 92% of students were Non-White students, including 61% of Hispanic students. Additionally, HISD (2010) reported that approximately 81% of students were economically disadvantaged, with large numbers of ethnically diverse students coming from homes where annual household incomes were less than \$25,000. Drastic changes in the percentages of Black, Hispanic, and White students in public schools between 2000 and 2040 are of enormous importance to the cultural, social, and economic well-being of individuals and the entire citizenry of Texas (Fry & Gonzales, 2008; Murdock, 2006, 2007; Orfield, 2000; Orfield & Lee, 2007; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004).

As American society is rapidly woven into a different tapestry with the influx and growth of Hispanic

populations as projected until 2040 (Murdock, 2006, 2007), the ever-present, ever-perplexing academic achievement gap will continue to be a major flaw in the fabric of America's educational systems that stigmatizes diverse populations of students and disallows equal access and quality (Gray, 2005; Munoz, 2005; Orfield, 2000; Orfield & Lee, 2007; Orfield et al., 2004). According to Fraser (2001), a democratically constructed public education system to perpetuate the idea of an informed citizenry was one of America's most monumental undertakings. However, the same public education system, knowingly or unknowingly, created the "separation of social classes...and further entrenched social divisions" (Munoz, 2005, pp. 3-4).

Wise (2008) stated that high schools were not created to meet today's imperative of graduating all students college- and career-ready. From the onset of the modern American high school until the late 1930s, high school was a luxury for students from upper-socioeconomic strata; many of whom did not graduate (Wise, 2008). Additionally, Wise (2008) explained that until the education revolution of the 1960s "getting a well-paying job without a high school diploma was not simply possible; it was the norm" (p. 2). In contrast, the U.S. Department of Labor (2006) reported that 90% of career-path jobs that lead to self-sufficiency in the 21st century required some form of postsecondary education. Wise (2008) further stated that the U.S. government is trying to solve complex societal and economic problems using an institution that was never intended to solve problems of this magnitude.

Closing the Gaps

In 2009, Achieve, Inc. released *Closing the Expectation Gap 2009: Fourth Annual 50-State Progress Report on the Alignment of High School Policies with the Demands of College and Careers* to "help states raise academic standards, improve assessment, and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education and training, careers, and citizenship" (Achieve, Inc., 2009, p. i). In 2005, at the National Summit on High Schools, the American Diploma Project (ADP) a collaborative effort by The Fordham Foundation, The Education Trust, and Achieve, Inc., was founded with 13 states participating to close the expectations gap (Achieve, Inc., 2009). In 2009, the ADP network is comprised of 34 states and approximately 85% of America's students (Achieve, Inc., 2009).

Closing the Expectation Gap annual reports outline the four ADP objectives and illuminate the annual progress being made nationally to alleviate student readiness and transition problems between secondary and postsecondary schools to increase both high school and college graduation rates (Achieve, Inc., 2009). From 2005 to 2009, 23 states aligned high school standards with college expectations, and 21 states plus DC are in the alignment process. College- and career-ready diplomas are required by 21 states and DC, with eight states presently raising graduation standards. Ten states use tests aligned with college and career expectations, 10 states administer assessments also used for college admission placement, and 23 states are in the process of aligning exit tests to college- and career-ready expectations. Additionally, 12 states have P-16 data systems in place to examine and measure student data at least once annually, and 37 states and DC are in the process of developing such systems. In 2009, all 50 states and DC have in place or are developing longitudinal data accountability systems (Achieve, Inc., 2009).

Every year the ACT disseminates a national profile highlighting the ACT test and test-taker statistics, and each annual profile provides information about the performance of graduating seniors who took the ACT as sophomores, juniors, or seniors. Focused on in the yearly profiles are: (a) student test performance in the context of college-readiness, (b) the number of graduates exposed to college

entrance testing and the percent of race/ethnicity participation, (c) percent of students pursuing a core curriculum, (d) the impact of rigorous coursework on achievement, (e) the percent of students meeting ACT College-Readiness Benchmark Scores in each content area, (f) the extent to which student aspirations match performance, and (g) colleges and universities to which students send test results (ACT, 2009).

In the *Measuring College and Career Readiness: The Class of 2009*, ACT (2009) reported that the national college-ready graduate rate using all four benchmarks (i.e., English, mathematics, reading, and science) was 23%. This figure of 23% being college-ready reflects an increase of 2% from 2005, but a decrease of 1% from 2008. Readers are referred to Table 1 to peruse the 5-year national trend in the percent of students meeting ACT college-readiness benchmarks.

Composite test scores reported by the ACT (2009) for student ethnicity reveal that an academic achievement gap based on standardized test scores was present between Black and White students, 16.9 and 22.2 respectively. Though the academic achievement gap was less between Hispanic and White students, 18.7 and 22.2 respectively, the gap was still present. Readers are referred to Table 2 to examine the 5-year national trend in the ACT average composite scores by ethnicity.

In the *2009 College Bound Seniors: Total Group Profile Report*, College Board (2009b) researchers reported that the SAT mean score in critical reading had decreased 29 points, from 530 to 501, and the mathematics mean score had increased 6 points, from 509 to 515, over the 38 year period from 1972 to 2009. With the increased admissions standards at most colleges in the U.S., the lower mean score in critical reading and the relatively flat score in mathematics indicates that high school graduates on average are not as college-ready as their predecessors based on standardized test scores (Berlin & Sum, 1988; Kirsh et al., 2007; Ravitch, 2010; Sum, Kirsh, & Taggart, 2002; Zhao, 2009a).

However, scores reported by socioeconomic level bear out the findings of much of the research on the academic achievement gap between students in the low socioeconomic level and their counterparts in the high socioeconomic group (Alexander, Entwistle, & Olson, 2007; Anyon, 2005; Berliner 2006; Braun et al., 2006; Coleman et al., 1966; Lee & Wong, 2004; Raines, 2006). Students in the lowest socioeconomic level (i.e., income less than \$20,000) on average scored 434 in critical reading and 457 in mathematics for a composite score of 891 (College Board, 2009b). Students in the highest socioeconomic level (i.e., more than \$200,000) on average scored 563 in critical reading and 579 in mathematics for a composite score of 1142, which is 251 points higher than students in the lowest socioeconomic group (College Board, 2009). Readers are referred to Table 3 to examine the 3-year trend in the SAT national average composite scores for critical reading and mathematics by socioeconomic status.

Beginning in 2008, reported income increment levels were doubled and the ceiling income was over \$200,000 (College Board, 2008, 2009). As each income increment level doubled, composite scores in critical reading and mathematics increased, but the academic achievement between the lowest and highest groups, as measured by SAT scores, was 16 points higher in 2009 than in 2005. Readers are referred to Table 4 to examine the 2-year trend in the SAT national average composite scores for critical reading and mathematics by socioeconomic status.

In 2009, SAT average composite scores by ethnicity revealed that White students on average had a

composite score for critical reading and mathematics of 1064 followed by Hispanic students with a composite score of 910 and Black students with a composite score of 855 (College Board, 2009). This variance is somewhat less than socioeconomic variance, but the scores do coincide with research findings on student academic achievement by ethnicity (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Berliner, 1993, 2006; Coleman et al., 1966; Gray, 2005; Scott, 2007; Williams, 2005). Readers are referred to Table 5 to examine the 5-year trend in the SAT national average composite scores by ethnicity.

The Achievement Gap and Cultural Reproduction

The SAT average composite scores for socioeconomic levels and ethnicity are indicative of research findings of the academic achievement gap between White and lower-socioeconomic, ethnically-diverse students (Balfanz, 2009; Berliner, 1993, 2006; Braun et al., 2006; Gray, 2005; Scott, 2007). Stated succinctly, “put bluntly, poverty sucks. Among the poor the normal variation we see in academic talent has been sucked away, like corn growing in bad soil. School reformers are doing their best. But they are often planting in poor soil” (Berliner, 2006, p. 972). Balfanz (2009) reported,

the high school experiences of many U.S. students continue to be separate and unequal. Most Latino and African American students attend highschoools with disproportionately high concentrations of low-income and minority students. Four out of ten white students attend high schools with few minority students. (pp. 21-22)

The philosophical and sociological concepts of capital in Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction include: (a) cultural capital, (b) social capital, (c) economic capital, and (d) symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1967, 1977a, 1977b, 1984, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1979; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). How and when capital is used, by whom it is used, and to what personal advantage it is used is made clear with the concepts of field and habitus (Bourdieu, 1967, 1977a, 1977b, 1984, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1979; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Although much of his theoretical framework was adapted from the ideas of prominent sociologists, philosophers, and anthropologists who had an influence on his life and writing, Bourdieu erased the rigidity of capital forms by creating fluidity in both field and habitus (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Robbins, 2005; Silva, 2001; Wacquant, 2002).

Lareau and Horvat (1999) explained the concepts of cultural reproduction well using the analogy of a card game:

In a card game (the field of interaction), the players (individuals) are all dealt cards (capital). However, each card and each hand have different values. Moreover, the value of each hand shifts according to the explicit rules of the game (the field of interaction) that is being played (as well as the way the game is being enacted). In other words, a good hand for a blackjack player may be a less valuable hand for gin rummy. In addition to having a different set of cards (capital), each player relies on a different set of skills (habitus) to play the cards (activate the capital). By folding the hand, a player may not activate his or her capital or may play the cards (activate the capital) expertly according to the rules of the given game. In another game (field), the same player may be dealt the same hand, yet because of a lack of knowledge of the rules of the game (habitus) play the hand poorly. Thus, in analyzing social settings, researchers must attend to the capital each individual in a given field has, as well as each individual’s ability and skill in activating the capital. (Lareau & Horvat, 1999, p. 39)

In their research in elementary and junior high schools in a small Midwestern town where Black students

and parents perceived that passive racism was practiced throughout the school district, Lareau and Horvat (1999) drew two critical distinctions about Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory. First, everyone has a certain amount of cultural capital to activate across different fields. Secondly, the ability to activate cultural capital and the manner in which it is activated, habitus, influence its value across the field (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital is "that which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic or social capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications" (p. 243). Silva (2001) concluded that Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital "implied an analogy with economic capital, which signifies a return. The return on the cultural capital takes the form of educational credentials and, ultimately, to occupational and social success" (pp. 896-897). Bourdieu's cultural reproduction is relevant to the college-readiness rates because parents' levels of education, learning, and occupational and social success are primary influences on their children's academic success (Bourdieu, 1967, 1977a, 1977b; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1979; Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Silva, 2001).

In today's society, graduating from high school, enrolling in college, and obtaining a bachelor's degree are seen as the primary means of increasing one's cultural capital and upward social mobility, which can be bestowed upon future generations as cultural reproduction (Balfanz, 2009; Berliner, 2006; Kirsh et al., 2007; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009; Ravitch, 2009, 2010; Zhao, 2009a, 2009b). Additionally, the cycle of cultural reproduction, with its many facets, is transmitted from parents with higher education attainment and economic status (i.e., middle and upper class) to their children who in turn invest their share to continue the process (Bourdieu, 1967, 1977a, 1977b, 1984, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1979; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Robbins, 2005; Silva, 2001; Wacquant, 2002).

Cultural reproduction is prevalent among higher socioeconomic classes, but is not as evident, if it exists at all, in their lower socioeconomic counterparts (Bourdieu, 1967; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1979; Raines, 2006). As a result, low socioeconomic students are at a disadvantage with students from middle and high socioeconomic environments because of the cultural capital attainment disparity of their parents and their ability to create cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1967, 1977a, 1977b; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1979; Dumais, 2002; Robbins, 2005; Silva, 2001; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). Braun et al. (2006) stated that cultural reproduction is accumulated over many generations, and "the inescapable conclusion is that the closing of the achievement gap will only happen over many generations" (p. 9). According to Miller (1995), family and peer variables account for more of the academic achievement differences in students than do school variables, and "that there are very consequential differences in the amounts of human capital possessed by young White adults than their African American and Latino counterparts and that these variations exist at most educational attainment levels" (Miller, 1995, p. 170).

Researchers have also suggested that the politics of education create an atmosphere of contradiction (Anyon, 2005; Berliner, 2006; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Naidoo, 2004; Orfield & Lee, 2007; Ravitch, 2009, 2010; Zhao, 2009a, 2009b). Legislators and educators are credited for championing consciousness about cultural and social inequalities when realistically educational legislation and school systems are promoting cultural reproduction of the dominant class (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Berliner, 2006; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Orfield, 2000; Ravitch, 2010). Cultural reproduction of the

dominant class, in the form of symbolic capital, may occur inadvertently because legislators and educators may not be aware that political stances and educational decisions are subconsciously driven by their membership in the dominant class (Bourdieu, 1967, 1977a, 1977b, 1984, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1979; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Robbins, 2005; Silva, 2001; Wacquant, 2002).

Although Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory is primarily based on the dissonance of socioeconomic classes, some researchers indicate that members of oppressed groups (e.g., Black, Gay, Hispanic, Native American, and Women) were usually unsubstantiated by the dominant class or power culture and, therefore, were unlikely to produce or reproduce forms of capital to sustain future generations (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986, 1998; Harris, 2006; Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Kenway & McLeod, 2004; Naidoo, 2004; Ogbu, 1978, 2004, 2008; Ogbu & Fordham, 1986). Postsecondary education is the primary avenue for beginning cultural reproduction, but researchers indicated, through an understanding of this cultural phenomenon, that cultural, social, and symbolic capital begin to accrue from academic experiences and participation in extracurricular activities at the elementary and secondary school levels (Bourdieu, 1967, 1977a, 1977b, 1984, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1979; DiMaggio, 1982; Dumais, 2002; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Nash, 1990; Silva, 2001).

It is critical to understand that cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital accrued through obtaining a college degree from an educational institution are only recognized and valued as capital by cultural, social, and economic peers who are on the same field with similar habitus (Webb et al., 2002). According to Wacquant (2002), Bourdieu believed that as individuals obtained specific cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital, that it was difficult to change their habitus, based on group parameters, as they interact with one another on a given field. In her study of capital reproduction in high schools in England, Silva (2001) indicated that most individual's *habitus* is the major contributing factor to a student's aspirations, persistence, and desire to excel academically in high school.

However, some individuals in less privileged groups, at the expense of ridicule and degradation by their peers (Fordham, 1985; Ogbu, 1978, 2004, 2008; Ogbu & Fordham, 1986; Naidoo, 2004), have the desire, ability, and persistence to obtain knowledge and make choices to change their habitus to level the education field, and therefore increase their cultural, social, and economic capital, which is the beginning of cultural reproduction (DiMaggio, 1982; Dumais, 2002; Flessa, 2007; Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Nash, 1990; Raines, 2006; Webb et al., 2002). Thus, opportunity exists for children in lower socioeconomic strata or from other unsubstantiated groups to make positive personal changes in their lives to break the chains of poverty, or erase societal stigmas, and begin to build a storehouse of cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital that can be transcended as cultural reproduction to future generations.

Conclusion

College students, despite extensive efforts to the contrary, continue to be under-prepared for the rigors of college. Moreover, the achievement gap, long documented to be present in K-12 education, is also present concerning college-readiness. As such, many students enter college unprepared, enroll in developmental education courses, and fail to graduate from college. Given the need for highly educated college graduates in the 21st century economy, the issue of college-readiness is of serious concern at a national policy level. Through our examination of the existing literature regarding college-readiness through the lens of cultural reproduction, we hope that our discussion has facilitated our

readers' understanding of the current state of affairs.

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Table 1

Five-Year Trend in Percentage of Students Meeting ACT National College-Readiness Benchmarks, 2005-2009

Subject	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
English	68	69	69	68	67
Math	41	42	43	43	42
Reading	51	53	53	53	53
Science	26	27	26	28	26
Composite	21	21	23	22	23

Note. Information for Table 1 was synthesized from ACT, 2009.

Table 2

Five-Year Trend in ACT National Average Composite Scores by Ethnicity, 2005-2009

Ethnicity	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Black	17.0	17.1	17.0	16.9	16.9
Hispanic	18.6	18.6	18.7	18.7	18.7
White	21.9	22.0	22.1	22.1	22.2

Note. Information for Table 2 was synthesized from ACT, 2009.

Table 3

Three-Year Trend in SAT National Average Composite Scores for Critical Reading and Mathematics by Socioeconomic Levels, 2005-2007

Socioeconomic Level	2005	2006	2007
Less than \$10,000	884	886	878
\$20, 000-\$30,000	937	936	919
\$50,000-\$60,000	1014	1009	1001
\$80,000-\$100,000	1063	1057	1049
More than \$100,000	1119	1123	1100

Note. Information for Table 3 was synthesized from College Board, 2005, 2006, 2007.

Table 4

Two-Year Trend in SAT National Average Composite Scores for Critical Reading and Mathematics by Socioeconomic Levels, 2008-2009

Socioeconomic Level	2008	2009
Less than \$20,000	894	891
\$40, 000-\$60,000	984	985
\$80,000-\$100,000	1039	1071
\$120,000-\$140,000	1063	1071
\$160,000-\$2000,000	1083	1096
More than \$200,000	1123	1100

Note. Information for Table 4 was synthesized from College Board, 2008, 2009.

Table 5

Five-Year Trend in SAT National Average Composite Scores for Critical Reading and Mathematics by Ethnicity, 2005-2009

Ethnicity	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Black	864	863	852	859	855
Hispanic	922	918	919	914	910
White	1068	1063	1061	1065	1064

Note. Information for Table 5 was synthesized from College Board, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009.

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