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America's rich/poor education gap



By

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The premise of Charles Murray's new book, *Coming Apart*, is that the upper- middle class and lower-middle class are becoming more distinct culturally as well as economically. He focuses his research primarily on white America because he contends the unhealthy gaps in our society are fueled primarily by class, not race.

A new Stanford University study offers one additional evidence about the gap being increasingly about rich and poor. Stanford researcher Sean Reardon found that the education differences between rich and poor are more acute than between races. In fact, the gap in test scores between the children of wealthier families and those of poorer families is almost twice that of the gap between Anglo and black students.

In pointing this out, I am not trying to minimize racial polarities. We regularly discuss on this blog the academic achievement differences between Anglos and minority students, especially Latinos. We will continue to spend time discussing that gap, but there is evidence that shows the divides in America are not solely because of race.

If that is the case, how do we as Americans, Texans and Dallasites respond to the rich/poor gap?

To me, the answer largely has to do with the quality of our public schools.

The rich/poor educational gap will only worsen if wealthy folks put their kids in quality private schools while poor families are relegated to lesser public schools. I do not fault families for choosing private schools. Heck, I support experiments with vouchers that allow low-income families to put their kids in them. But building up our public school systems will create a more level playing field between rich and poor families when it comes to educational opportunities.

Strong public school systems also give greater incentives to wealthier families to put their kids in them. At that point, we will have a greater shot at the kind of melting pot our society needs to survive.

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