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A comparative analysis of the racial and class achievement gap in schooling in the United States, France, and South Africa

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A Comparative Analysis of the Racial and Class Achievement Gap in Schooling in the
United States, France, and South Africa

An Honors Program Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Education
James Madison University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Bachelor of Science

by Taylor Jade Fulcher
May 2015

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program.

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Methods and Limitations

This comparative analysis was conducted through the analysis of existing literature and data. This data is compiled through various resources such as journals, periodicals, textbooks, and government documents. The information available from these sources creates a basis for comparison and analysis of the data collected from each country. The research used in this thesis support inequalities in the school system based on racial and socioeconomic factors. Limitations of this research project include gaps in age of research studies used for data, limited resources on specific topics due to language differences, and limited access to documents outside of the United States. In addition, all data sets used in this comparative analysis do not measure the same variable. For example, some data sets give average student scores based on a specific factor, such as wealth quartile, while other data sets present the number of students performing above and below the average score based on the school type. This makes directly comparing the data impossible because student performance is measured through different variables, methods, and means. However, this type of data does allow the reader to compare the overall impact of specific policies and practice on student performance. This is possible because the general fluctuation patterns of student performance can still be analyzed reflective to socio-economic status or race/ethnicity.

Introduction

Throughout our world, education sets the foundation for the growth and development of our future generations. In an ideal world, all students would have equal access to a quality education regardless of cultural background. However, it is evident that education systems throughout the world sort and select students based on characteristics that reflect the cultural norm of a given country's historical context and power dynamics in society, making it impossible for each and every student to have equal access to a quality education. This idea reflects the "achievement gap," a term that has made its way into everyday conversation regarding education in the United States. While the achievement gap is a term of much debate for recent scholars, a widely accepted definition refers to the difference in standardized assessment scores between students of various demographic groups (Anderson, Medrich, & Fowler, 2007). While there are many different explanations as to why this gap exists, the National Governors Association states that the achievement gap "is a matter of a race and class" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3). In other words, socio-economic and racial/ethnicity factors play a significant role in student achievement. If educational researchers and policy makers desire to close the achievement gap, these two factors must be fully examined through a historical and cultural lens. A comparative analysis on the achievement gap allows educators to explore the benefits, barriers, and overlaps among countries.

This research study focuses on three countries: the United States, France, and South Africa. These countries were chosen for this comparative analysis because each takes a unique approach to their education system in regards to ensuring inclusive education for students under the age of ten. Successful inclusive education provides all students with access to learning and individual support, regardless of cultural differences. While the issue of the income and racial achievement

gap may seem similar on the surface for these three countries, research suggests that these issues, deeply embedded in each country's history of racial segregation and economic inequality, are connected to the struggle of these students in acquiring necessary cultural capital. According to Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, social structure is maintained and reproduced within the education system through cultural capital, which is the way in which "particular knowledge, linguistic behavior, modes and thought of expression, cultural standards, and curricular reflect dominant social structures" in society (Shim, 2012, p. 214). Thus, success in school is attributed to one's possession of cultural capital. Certain schools and communities require a specific form of cultural capital and if a person does not possess this capital, they are challenged with having limited access and being seen as inadequate by those who do possess the cultural capital. The comparative analysis conducted in this thesis illustrates how schools sort and select students based on racial identity and socioeconomic status, hindering access to cultural capital.

In order to provide a meaningful comparative analysis of these three countries, all factors that contribute to the achievement gap must be incorporated. The comparison of student achievement in the United States to that of other countries raises concerns for many scholars because many overlook the idea that these comparisons "must be evaluated in light of both the social histories and the recent demographic changes that have shaped and are rapidly reshaping the nature of the U.S. student population, their families, and society at large" (Murray, 1998, p. 376). This applies to not only the United States but all countries being compared; it cannot be based off of only standardized testing, history of racial segregation, or current economy. The social histories and recent demographic changes of students, their families, and the community must be examined in combination with each other in order to recognize where the root of the inequality lies. While the United States, France, and South Africa each implement differing approaches to address this

diversity in schools, equal access to quality education remains a critical issue. In order to complete this comparative analysis through a culturally responsive lens, one must look at the underlying factors that influence the system of schooling in each country. By analyzing and comparing the policies and practice of education in the United States, France, and South Africa from this perspective, we can better understand how we can learn from these challenges to create a culturally responsive system of schooling. This thesis allows us to explore the challenges of and opportunities for supporting quality education systems that are equally accessible to all students regardless of racial or ethnic background.

Clarity of definitions is important for meaningful analysis. There are certain terms that must be clearly understood by the reader so they can be applied in the correct context. When the term culture is used, it refers to the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; the characteristic features of everyday existence shared by people in a place or time (“Culture”, 2015). To understand the difference between education and schooling, the term education refers to the knowledge and development resulting from an educational process while schooling refers to instruction, training, guidance, or discipline derived from experience within a formal system (“Education”, 2015; “Schooling”, 2015). Race and ethnicity also need to be clearly defined. The term race refers to a category of humankind that shares certain distinctive physical traits while ethnicity refers to an affiliation with a large group of people who have the same customs, religion, origin, etc. (“Race”, 2015; “Ethnicity”, 2015). Finally, the term segregation is used to refer to the separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means (“Segregation”, 2015).

I. History of Racial Segregation and Economic System

In order to understand how the history of segregation and economic system of the United States, France, and South Africa mold their education systems, a brief overview of the history of segregation in each country will be given. This will consist of major movements and policies that have affected the overall beliefs and underpinnings of segregation in each country. Through awareness of the historical roots of inequality in each country, the reader will be able to understand how this history has impacted the foundation and schooling system in each country.

The United States

Since before colonial times, many politicians and educators have always preached for equal opportunity and good citizenship but have instead engaged themselves in racial segregation, discrimination against immigrants, non-whites, and various religions (Spring, 2007, p. 2). As soon as European explorers set foot in the New World in the late 1400's, they began to push out the Native Americans living on this land and a policy of displacement was immediately put into place by the Europeans (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2012). Shortly after, Africans were transported by slave ships to North America, the Caribbean, and South America. In the New World in North America, the English became the dominant force on the new land and, over time, began to encourage immigrants to travel to the United States. As Africans and other immigrants from Europe began to settle in the United States, it became the collective thought of white, middle-class Anglo Saxon Protestants that a major goal of public schools was to make immigrant children as much like them as possible. Joel Spring (2007) defines this idea as cultural genocide, the act of using education to destroy another person's culture.

As the United States has grown and transformed over time, there are many historical milestones that show the process of both segregation and assimilation of the diverse people of the United States (Cushner et al., 2012). The Civil War pushed the issue of enslavement of African peoples into all aspects of society and, although African Americans were freed from slavery in 1863, a powerful racial divide continued to spread throughout the country through covert practices of segregation. Before the war, educating African American slave children in public school was illegal. Between the 1880's and 1960's, Jim Crow laws were in full effect to enforce segregation throughout America through violence and isolation. Because of these hardships and persecutions faced by African Americans when attempting to join the mainstream American society, the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement began the push for equal rights for African Americans which challenged the idea of separate schools. In 1954, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision stated that separate but equal facilities were unconstitutional and African Americans were permitted in the same classrooms as white students (Cushner et al., 2012). Despite this decision, desegregation in the United States school system is still held higher in perception than in reality, meaning educational inequality is still very much present.

The evolution of America's immigration policies has also led to racial and ethnic persecution in the United States. Before 1965, U.S. immigration policy clearly and openly discriminated against Asians, Africans, and Southern/Eastern Europeans (Massey, 2013). The "Zoot Suit" riots consisted of the killing of Mexican Americans in 1943. With intentions to remove racism from the previous immigration laws, the U.S. immigration policy was reformed to create strict requirements and reduced opportunities for legal immigration into the United States, specifically from Mexico (Loiacono & Maloff, 2006). Rather than removing racism from the law, this reform led to a rise in illegal immigrants making their way into the American workforce

being seen as “criminals” and “lawbreakers” and perceived as a threat to society (Loiacono & Maloff, 2006). Illegal immigrants were faced with great animosity from certain categories of American citizens due to the belief that they are stealing jobs away from citizens and receiving benefits, such as health care, without paying any cost (Loiacono & Maloff, 2006). The historical inequality that arose from racial segregation and immigration policies did not evolve from small numbers of individuals; these were values held by the nation’s leaders and citizens (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Therefore, the inequality of students based on race existed long before the term “achievement gap” even existed. While the history of racial segregation in the United States plays a key role in the achievement gap today, the role of economics also contributes to this issue. In order to fully understand how the practice and policy of education is reflective in the achievement gap, the nature of the economic system in the United States must be included. According to the Central Intelligence Agency (2014a), the United States is made up a market-oriented economy where most power is held by private individuals and business firms, making the U.S. one of the largest and most technologically powerful countries in the world. The United States’ population totals around 318,892,103 and is a constitution-based federal republic. Of these people, 79.9% are white, 12.8% black, 4.4% Asian, 0.97% American Indian and Alaska native, and 0.18% native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. While persons of Hispanic/Spanish/Latino decent are not included in this ratio because, in the United States, they can be of any race or ethnic group, about 15.1% of the population is Hispanic. The average school life expectancy totals seventeen years and 15.1% of the population lives below the poverty line. The level in family income distribution is 45 on the Gini index, meaning it has a relatively high level of unequal distribution of income throughout the country. (Central

Intelligence Agency, 2014a) As it is shown, the history of racial segregation and current economy create a foundation of inequality in the United States.

Overall, the historical inequalities of segregation and economy are now reflected within the school system. According to Gary Orfield, co-founder of the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, the success of the desegregation of schools through the Brown decision is now being undone due to the structural inequalities of today's racially and economically segregated schools (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). This means that racial and economic inequality within schools in the United States has continued to grow, despite the Brown v. Board decision. According to Ladson-Billings (2006), these inequalities have created an "education debt," meaning a debt in resources to minority and low-socioeconomic status students. Built into economic structures and fostered through a legacy of privilege, the achievement gap persists. The presence of an "education debt" hinders the closing the achievement gap because current resources lag behind their privileged counterparts. This heightens the ongoing inequality in schooling. In section II, the current policies and practices of education are discussed and connected to these factors.

France

Segregation in France has much to do with its development of a colonial empire and history of immigration (Vladescu, 2006). After the French Revolution of 1789, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was passed which set the foundation for human rights, defining the individual and natural rights of all men. In the late 1800's the Industrial Revolution in France paved the way for immigrants by creating an excessive need for workers in both factories and businesses. Immigrants from Italy and Belgium began to come to France to fill this need, soon followed by North Africa and immigrants from the Maghreb, which include Algeria,

Tunisia, and Morocco. Assimilation of the Algerian workers into French society was interrupted by the Algerian war in 1954, causing the overall goal of assimilating these immigrants into French society to change into a strategy of control so the French government could more closely regulate migrants.

At the end of WWII, the National Office of Immigration was created. This office was meant to increase population growth to rebuild the post-World War II French economy and led to the creation of policies to actively regulate immigration in France, thus creating one of the largest immigrations periods in French history (Maillard, 2005). In English, “integrating” members of racial, religious, and ethnic groups means giving them equal opportunity to belong to American society (Integrate, 2015). The French High Council of Integration, however, defines integration as “a middle-of-the-road position between ‘assimilation’ and mere ‘insertion’, but as a specific ‘process.’” (Maillard, 2005, p. 71). This means that rather than adjusting French culture to accommodate for immigrants, immigrants must focus on accommodating to French society.

Beginning in the 1970’s, the massive oil shortage left France in a growing recession, causing immigration both to and from France to significantly decrease, leading to the settling of over 4 million Muslims in France (Vladesu, 2006). Public housing units were built to accommodate this vast growth in population, however these immigrants began to face pressure through environmental, political, and social aspects of society (Body-Gendrot, 2007). Adequate amenities, transportation and living facilities could not be offered due to the economic turmoil, the arrival of working class migrants pushing out mobile French workers, and French policies favoring home ownership over improvement of current public housing. This led to unemployment and discouragement from ever joining the mainstream French society.

Today, there are about 4 million-5 million Muslims living in France, however these Muslims are defined by their culture rather than their religious affiliation (Malliard, 2005). This means that they identify with their French culture and lifestyle more so than their religious views. Another reason why immigrant groups still face difficulty assimilating into French society is due to their difference in religion from the common French person. While religious tolerance is an important policy of the French state, most Muslim immigrants practice Islam rather than Christianity, causing their families to be under intense pressure from a host society that does not fully accept their cultural differences (Malliard, 2005). In the late 1900's, more intense legislation was enacted to stop illegal immigration as well integrate the settled immigrants into the French way of life. This included programs of amnesty and strict requirements to gain long-term resident status. Most recently in 2004, a law was passed by French officials that banned Muslim girls from wearing headscarves in public schools. This incident demonstrates the limitation of cultural expression of minority students within the schools and their limitation in expressing cultural beliefs that differed from the mainstream French society.

As it is shown, the history racial segregation in France is much different than that of the United States. While focusing on ethnicity rather than race, immigrants were forcefully assimilated into French culture rather than separated. This demonstrates a strong sense of unity and nationality in French society. The current economy of France also plays into these values, which are reflected in the French education system. The French economy today is based upon a capitalism that preserves social equity through social spending policies and tax laws (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014b). Run as a republic, the population totals about 66,259,012. While the official population of various racial groups are not recorded, the major ethnic groups are

Celtic and Latin and minority ethnic groups include North African, Indochinese, Teutonic, and Slavic. The school expectancy rate totals sixteen years and 7.9% of the population lives below the poverty line. The family income distribution is a 30.6 on the Gini index, which means it has a relatively low level of unequal income distribution. (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014b).

While these statistics highlight that France's economy is more economically balanced than the United States in terms of income distribution and poverty, these factors still have a profound effect on equal access to schooling.

South Africa

The most widely known form of racial segregation in South Africa were the policies of apartheid (Clark & Worger, 2004). While racial segregation can be traced back to 1652 when an economy was created from the importation of slaves from East Africa and Southeast Asia, continued European settlement began a clear line of segregation between blacks and whites. In 1948, the National Party rose to power in South Africa and began a period of enforced racial segregation and discriminatory laws. These laws separated the races in the social, political, and economic spheres of society, giving whites privilege over non-whites in almost every aspect of society. Black Africans were prohibited from entering cities without documentation, were forced to live in "squatter" camps which were an assembly of shacks without proper sanitation or running water. Black Africans were also banned from skilled jobs, forcing them to work factory jobs with little to no pay. (Clark & Worger, 2004). Therefore, inequality was pervasive in all aspects of South African life. The minority white South African population was privileged politically, socially, economically, and in the schooling system.

Beginning in the late 1950's, the South African government turned to brutal violence to enforce the policies of apartheid (Clark & Worger, 2004). Black South African leaders were imprisoned and their organizations and all forms of public protest against the government were banned. In 1960, a riot known as the Sharpeville Massacre, 69 South Africans were killed by the police during a protest against apartheid (Clark & Worger, 2004). In 1980, South Africa went into a period of Civil War between white and black South Africans in the fight against apartheid. In 1990, the National Party declared that the policies of apartheid were no longer in place and the South African government began to accept the idea that all South Africans, regardless of race, should be able to contribute to the electoral process. In the election of 1994, Nelson Mandela, who had been imprisoned since 1963 as a political activist against apartheid, was elected as the first president of the new South Africa (Clark & Worger, 2004).

While it is clear that apartheid created a legacy of racial segregation in South African history, the current economic system of South Africa illustrates this lasting inequality. Today, the republic of South Africa has a total population of about 48,375,645 and is made up of 79.2% black Africans, 8.9% whites, 8.9% colored, 2.5% Indian/Asian, and 0.5% other (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014c). In this classification scheme, black Africans refer to those who are South African native while colored are those of mixed race or are not citizens of South Africa. While there is no official data that has been published on school life expectancy for the entire population, only about half of non-white students receive an education past the age of fifteen (Funk & Wagnalls, 2014). South Africa is among the top countries with the highest rates poverty with 31.3% of the population living below the poverty line. The distribution of family income in South Africa is 63.1 on the Gini index, making it the second highest in the world.

(Central Intelligence Agency, 2014c) This shows that South Africa clearly has much economic inequality that is rooted in its history of racial segregation.

II. Current Foundations of Education

In order to fully understand how the history of racial segregation and current economy in the United States, France, and South Africa have led to unequal access to education in each country, this section breaks down the current systems of schooling in place for each country. This includes structure, content of curriculum, and current laws and policies in place. By looking at the current systems of education in each country, the reader can begin to develop a framework for where the inequality of education begins to unfold. This framework will then be used as a basis to fairly and accurately analyze the data presented in Section III.

The United States

In the United States, formal schooling lasts 13 years and begins at age 5. The system of education is split into four sections: early childhood, elementary school, middle school, and high school. While students begin Kindergarten at the age of 5 in almost all states, the compulsory age for education varies between the ages of 5 and 7 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014b). While early childhood education is not required, common forms include day-care and pre-kindergarten. Day-care settings focus on providing the child with a safe environment while parents are away and, although not required, may include some forms of academic integration and socializing skills (Corsi-Bunker, 2013). In Pre-K, the curriculum focuses on social, physical, emotional, and cognitive development as well as basic academic concepts such as alphabet and colors (Corsi-Bunker, 2013).

The biggest difference in the education system of the United States in comparison to France and South Africa is that the United States does not have a national curriculum for education (Corsi-Bunker, 2013). In fact, education is not mentioned in the Constitution and the

primary responsibility for creating and implementing the school system lies within the power of each state. Within each state, laws concerning curriculum, attendance, hiring of staff, and finances are created through a department of education. Therefore, it is difficult to give specific details on the current education system in the United States because these factors all vary from state to state. However, most all elementary school provide instruction for the basic academic skills of reading, writing, mathematics, history and geography (social sciences), music, science, art, and physical education. While many states introduce students to a foreign language as early as elementary school, introduction to a foreign language does not typically occur until middle school or early high school. The United States does have a national Department of Education which is responsible for the following: creating policies regarding the national funding of education, collecting data and regulating research on school throughout the country, addressing major issues regarding education, and enforcing federal laws prohibiting discrimination within the school systems (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

While the specific curricula implemented in the elementary schools varies between states, the U.S. Department of Education provides the three main guiding principles used in supporting high academic achievement and student success (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a). The first principle is “creating positive climates and focus on prevention”, meaning schools prevent problem behaviors and provide necessary intervention to struggling and at-risk students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a, p. 1). This can be done by creating climates that engage all students in learning and using evidence-based practices to manage student behavior. The second principle is “develop clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to address disruptive student behaviors” (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a, p. 1). This means that all schools should have clear discipline policies in order to improve behavior, engagement, and

achievement. The last principle states that schools should “ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement” (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a, p. 1). This principle is perhaps the most critical to this thesis; it states that schools are required to provide fair and equal access to education. Sections 4 and 5 present data that examine the success of the United States in upholding this principle.

One of the key acts of legislation that makes up today’s education system is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Editorial Projects, 2011). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, originally passed in 1965, highlighted an importance of equal access to education and set high standards for academic achievement (Editorial Projects, 2011). The NCLB Act, passed in 2001, created requirements to better regulate the state’s involvement in student achievement through annual testing by the states, annual report cards, national teacher qualifications, and more flexibility in state funding. It also requires that students meet a set yearly academic progress in each state and created a grant to fund a program called Reading First, an early level reading program for schools in high poverty areas. In the United States school system, one major national annual assessment is the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014a). While each state requires various formal and informal assessments throughout the school year, the NAEP is the largest national and continuous assessment in the United States. Assessments are conducted in nearly all basic academic areas, including mathematics, reading, science, writing, arts, and social sciences. NAEP provides both state and national assessments that measure content achievement, instructional experiences, and school environment. This assessment is meant to gather this information on large groups and populations of students rather than scores of individual students. In reference to the achievement

gap, these assessments are critical to analyzing student performance of racial minority and low-income students. Being familiar with these assessments as well as the other policies and practices of the United States education system allows for a reasonable and rational comparison to that of France and South Africa.

France

In France, the system of early education is split into three stages: primary school, secondary school, and high school (School Education in France, 2010). The primary school level is divided into two sections; nursery school and elementary school. Children begin nursery school at the age of two or three and attend until they are six. From the ages of six to eleven, children attend elementary school. While nursery school is optional, a majority of students ages 3 and up attend because it is free throughout the country. Students are split into three sections: Petite, Moyenne, and Grande depending on their age. The nursery school curriculum focuses on the following core areas: language and writing, movement and expression, discovering the world, becoming a student, and seeing, feeling, imagining, and creating (School Education in France, 2010). Beginning in the Grande section, students begin learning a second language. Overall, nursery school is intended to give children the opportunity to develop their own learning and successfully prepare them to enter primary school.

When the child reaches the age of 6, they begin primary school which is compulsory in France (School Education in France, 2010). The class structure is separated into five different sections: Cours Préparatoire (CP), Cours Élémentaire 1 (CE1), Cours Élémentaire 2 (CE2), Cours Moyen (CM1), and Cours Moyen (CM2). Over these five years of education, the curriculum is split into two cycles of learning. The first cycle focuses on basic skills and takes

place during the sections CP and CE1. During this cycle, the main priority for students is learning mathematics and the French language. Other subjects including foreign language, arts, music, and physical education are also taught during this cycle. The second cycle takes place during the next three years, which are sections CE2, CM1, and CM2. This cycle focuses on literature, geography, history, science, and introduces the students to information and communication technology. This cycle also encourages students to begin developing skills in experimentation, imagination, reasoning and intellectual thought. National standardized testing in France has been optional for primary school since 2007 (Mattei, 2012). In the first cycle of schooling, students are assessed on their mathematics skills as well as their fluency in French reading and writing (School Education in France, 2010). The second assessment is taken at the end of the CM2 cycle of primary education and tests all the key subjects taught in primary schools.

In the French system of education, one of the main philosophies of education is the idea of encyclopaedism, which embodies the principles of rationality and universality (Pepin & Moon, 1999). The principle of rationality in schools encourages teachers to focus on subjects that foster coherent and logical abilities, while universality is the idea that cultural patterns, beliefs, and values are existent everywhere under all conditions (Pepin & Moon, 1999; Universal, 2015). Both of these principles are implemented through the teaching of the same curriculum for all students. Another key practice of the philosophy of education in France is the concept of *laïcité*; the idea that “traditionally leaves the social and moral education for the home environment, whereas intellectual and academic work is expected to be placed in school” (Pepin & Moon, 1999, p. 4). This means religious involvement should not be present in government affairs, including public school. Since France still believes in the principle of religious freedom,

students are given one day a week of school to allow for religious teachings at home. By understanding these principles and other practices of French education, the meaning behind the data representing student performance can be analyzed from a stable viewpoint.

South Africa

In South Africa, schooling takes place over 13 years with primary school beginning at grade R (Reception year) and going through grade 7 (T. Harris, personal communication, March 11, 2015). Compulsory education begins at Grade 1, or age 7, while Grade R can be seen as an equivalent to Kindergarten. The system of early education in South Africa is split into phases; Foundation Phase (Reception – Grade 3) and Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) (Department of Basic Education, 2011). During the foundation phase, the main subjects taught include language, mathematics, and life skills. In the area of language, the first additional language is typically introduced during Grade 1. Under life skills, students focus on beginning knowledge, creative arts, physical education, and personal and social well-being. In the Intermediate Phase, the main subject areas include mathematics, natural sciences and technology, social sciences, and life skills. (Department of Basic Education, 2011)

In 2011, The Department of Basic Education created a guide for implementing the curriculum known as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This policy statement was created in order to give teachers more specific methods and strategies on how to implement each Learning Area in their classroom. It changes the curriculum to focus on literacy and numeracy and help close the gap between high-income and low-income schools (Department of Basic Education, 2011) Within the CAPS, it specifically states that the National Curriculum Statement is based on the principle of social

transformation, meaning equal education is available for all. It states, “ensuring the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population” (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p. 4). Another key principle of the South African Education system is the protection of human rights, which comes as a result of the legacy of apartheid. It states that the National Curriculum Statement is sensitive to the issues of diversity and focus on social justice, inclusivity, and a healthy environment (The Department of Education of South Africa, 2002).

Some of the key legislation that was created in order to uphold these principles are the National Education Policy Act and the South African Schools Act (The Department of Education of South Africa, 2002). The National Education Policy Act, passed in 1996, laid out changes to transform the schools in a democratic system of education. In addition, the South African Schools Act was also passed in 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 2011). This act determined the basic standards of achievement and procedures for assessment. In order to assess the students’ learning progress, CAPS provides teachers with specific school-based assessment strategies within each Learning Area (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The Annual National Assessment (ANA) was introduced in 2011 and is used in Grades 1-6 and Grade 9. This assessment is split into two components: the Universal ANA and the Verification ANA. The Universal ANA is given to all students within the grade range and is used to make it easier for districts to detect those schools that need additional support and provide parents with data of their child’s progression. The Verification ANA is used to identify and analyze the factors that contribute to students’ performance. Background information is collected on both teachers and students and the results are used to provide national and regional data of academic performance. (Department of Basic Education, 2011)

In South Africa, it is clear that the current structure of schooling was created with the intent to improve students' education despite the legacy left by apartheid. In the United States, France, and South Africa, specific subjects are taught that address the basic content knowledge for any human being around the world. In addition, each country implement assessments that are specific to these content areas. Despite this, there are still vast inequalities in each school system in terms of socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity. In Section III, data is presented from various assessments and studies that is reflective of these inequalities. Each set of data measures student achievement in some form and will be used to analyze how each country's history of racial segregation and current economy have molded school systems that provide unequal access to education for all students.

III. Inclusive Educational Practices:

A. Poverty Students and Low-Income Students

The United States

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, 22% of children living in the United States come from households with family incomes below the federally-determined poverty level of \$23,550 a year (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2011). In order for a family to cover basic living expenses, that amount must be at least doubled, leaving nearly 45% of children living in low-income households (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2011). Therefore, it is clearly evident that addressing the needs of low-income students is critical in the classroom. In a study conducted by the NAEP in 2011, data was collected on the knowledge and skills demonstrated by low-income and poverty students in the areas of reading and mathematics between the years of 2003 and 2011. In the mathematics section, students are tested on number properties and operations, measurement, geometry, data analysis, statistics and probability, and algebra. In the reading section, students are tested on reading comprehension skills of literacy and informational texts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). In order to measure the income level of the students being tested, NAEP used the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) established through the United States Department of Agriculture. NSLP is a federally assisted meal program present in both public and private schools to provide low-cost or free lunches to students who are eligible (United States Department of Agriculture, 2013). Students who come from families with incomes below 130% of the poverty level are eligible for free lunch while families with incomes between 130% and 185% the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price lunch (United States Department of Agriculture, 2013). This allows us to analyze

the data by looking at the average scores of students who are considered as low-income or in poverty compared to students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

The results for the mathematics scores for this study were generated from a representative sample of 209,000 students from 8,500 schools while the reading scores came from a sample of 213,100 students from 8,500 schools (Figures 3 and 4) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, p. 10). In the results from the reading scores for 2003, students who were not eligible for free or reduced lunch had an average score of 229, students who qualified for reduced price lunch had an average score of 211, and students who qualified for free lunch had an average score of 199 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, p. 11). In 2011, this trend continued with students who were not eligible having an average score of 235, students eligible for reduced price with a score of 218, and students eligible for free lunch with the score of 206 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, p. 11). For the mathematics test, the scores followed an almost identical pattern. In 2003, students who were not eligible received an average score of 244, student eligible for reduced price lunch with a score of 230, and students eligible for free lunch with a score of 220 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, p. 10). In 2013, students who were not eligible received an average score of 252, student eligible for reduced price lunch scored 239, and students eligible for free lunch scored 228 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, p. 10). On both the reading and mathematics tests, there were no students who qualified for free lunch who scored higher than the lowest score of students who did not qualify for either.

From this study, it is evident that there is a direct correlation between socioeconomic status and student performance based on test scores. In both 2003 and 2011, students who were identified as over 130% below the poverty line consistently generated the lowest average score

while students who did not qualify for any federal assistance generated the highest average scores. Therefore, based on this assessment, students who come from families with the highest incomes consistently perform better in both subjects than students that come from low-income families. It is important to note that since 2003, it is the percentage of students eligible for both free lunch and reduced price lunch that continues to increase (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, p. 11). This study is evidence that the economic inequality of family income in the United States is a significant factor affecting student performance on standardized tests.

A report completed in 2009 through the United States Department of Education analyzed how federal funds were distributed and used in connection with high-poverty and low-poverty schools. While schools in the United States receive funding from both the state and federal levels, this report concluded that 38% of all federal funds and 21% of all state and local funds were distributed to the districts in the highest poverty quartile (Chambers et al., 2009, p. 20). This report also concluded that 51-75% of funds received from federal programs were used for instruction, meaning instructional staff salaries and materials (Chambers et al., 2009, p. 20). The remaining funds were used for instructional support, including professional development programs, reading coaches, school libraries, counselors and health services, and parent involvement.

In order to address the income achievement gap, a major program called Race to the Top, launched by the U.S. government in 2009, was an attempt to reform education in the following four areas: creating standards and assessments for students, training and rewarding effective teachers, building data systems that measure both student and teacher success, and improving low-performing schools. In addition, Title I of NCLB provides funding to schools that have high concentrations of low-income students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014c). While there are

specific formulas to determine the amount of funds given to each school district, the schools with the lowest proficient rates in each states, known as priority schools, are given addition funds and grants for resources. In addition, the United States has funded many pre-k programs in order to address the high number of low-income students throughout the country (U.S. Department of Education, 2014b). Head Start, established in 1965, is one of these programs that is specifically intended for low-income children from birth to age 5 (Early Childhood Learning, 2015). Head Start is a program that supports the development of children through services related to social skills, academic skills, health, and nutrition. These services are provided by both public and private agencies funded by grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Placement of Head Start programs are determined by needs of the local community and can be based in centers, schools, or family homes.

Based on both the data from the NAEP and the distribution of federal funds to education programs, socioeconomic status has a noticeable effect on students' performance on standardized tests. An obvious trend from this data is that, although the government is providing limited funding and creating programs for low-income pre-schools, students are still not receiving the support they need to perform at the same level as students of a higher socioeconomic status. Therefore, although one of the core principles of education in the United States is providing equitable, fair, and successful education for all students, there is still a gap in equal access to education for low-income students. Multiple factors contribute to an equity gap; allocation of government funding, community and environmental contexts, quality teachers, and quality of the resources that schools have to fully educate their students all influence student achievement.

France

As stated previously, the French education system upholds the values of universality and rationality. The primary and secondary school systems are based on the principles of equality of education and opportunities for all students. Over recent years, France, like South Africa and the United States, has begun to see rising levels of economic inequalities present in the school systems (Neuman & Peer, 2002). In order to address this issue, France created zones d'éducation prioritaire, or "priority education zones". These zones represent low-income areas where children face a higher risk of academic failure or dropout. The schools within these zones are held to the same academic standards as all other French schools. The Ministry of Education creates a contract with each zone to ensure students are meeting the basic French education standards and are succeeding academically (Neuman & Peer, 2002). Schools within these priority education zones are ensured lower student-to-teacher ratios and teachers are given higher pay for working in them (Storey, 2007).

In a study done in 2008, scores from 8,000 students were analyzed from the assessment test taken at the end of the primary education cycle (CM2) (Mattei, 2012). These scores came from schools both in priority education zones and schools not in zones. According to this study, the percentage of students scoring below average in the French reading section has nearly doubled between the years of 1987 and 2007, totaling at 20% (Mattei, 2012, p. 88). In the same 20 years, the number of students scoring below average has tripled to 32% in the numeracy section of the test (Mattei, 2012, p. 88). This study provides data that compares student scores on the CM2 assessment between three types of schools: RAR, RRS, and all other schools. RAR schools represent schools that have a high concentration of students from low-income

communities and social difficulty. RRS schools are made of a mix of students from low-income communities and middle-class communities (Schooling in France, 2010).

The results of the study indicated that at the end of the CM2 cycle, the percentage of students achieving to the basic standards for RRS schools were 79.4% for French and 82.8% in mathematics (Mattei, 2012, p. 89). For RAR schools, 76.6 students were achieving to the basic standard in French and 81.1% in mathematics (Mattei, 2012, p. 89). In all other schools, 89.9% of students were achieving to the basic standards in French and 92.1% in mathematics (Mattei, 2012, p. 89). This data shows that students attending schools within priority education zones are performing at lower levels than students in middle and upper class schools. While students in all other schools scored noticeably higher than the schools in the priority education zones, the different between the total percentages were less than 15%. In addition, there is not a significant difference between the number of students performing to the basic standards between the RAR and RRS schools. This tells us that, while there is still some variation of student achievement based on income, it is not as obvious as the United States.

In addition to priority education zones, allocation of government funding also plays a role in the educational success of students. The French government spends and estimated 10% more per student living in low-income communities than the United States (Neuman & Peer, 2002, p. 12). Using this funding, the school systems in France are able to reduce class size and hire specialists that can serve individual classrooms. In addition, these funds are used to give teacher benefits and create partnerships within the community that help support disadvantaged students. These funds are also used towards preschools in order to give more children the opportunity to attend preschool. France also has a priority education policy that provides links to health and social services for the students. It also provides opportunities for community development to

create supports such as cultural institutions, research laboratories, and business to these communities.

While France holds tightly to its value of universality, this change in policy and funding encourages inclusive education for students of low socioeconomic status. Both the data collected and the allocation of federal funds for schools indicate that while there is still evidence of an income achievement gap, the education structure of French schools somehow produces students who perform at more equal levels than the United States. Reflecting back to Section I, this finding can be linked to the reflective levels of inequality in the current economy of both France in the United States. Since the United States demonstrates higher levels of unequal income distribution and a higher percentage of people living below the poverty line, it can be concluded that these factors play directly into student performance in school.

South Africa

Although apartheid has been eradicated for over 18 years, there is still a large gap in the quality of education across schools throughout South Africa. Schools that serve primarily white students remain functional and have access to more funding, while schools that serve primarily the black community struggle to provide the basic numeracy and literacy skills to the students (Spaull, 2013). In a study completed in 2013, Spaull determined that the South African education system is actually made of up two sub-systems when comparing student performance to socioeconomic status. Using the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ), a national assessment which measures reading performance of students in Grade 6, these data sets show the factors behind the varying levels of student academic performance in mathematics and literacy skills. This study highlights the idea that

only a minority of learners in South Africa attend successfully functioning and well-funded schools and perform above average on local and national assessments compared to the remaining 75% who attend low-income schools and perform below average on the same assessments (Spaull, 2013, p. 437). Figure 1 illustrates the Learner Reading Scores collected from the SACMEQ in 2007 of four school wealth quartiles; poorest 25%, second poorest 25%, second wealthiest 25%, and the wealthiest 25%.

The results of the study show that students in the poorest, second poorest, and second wealthiest quartiles all generated an average score of about 400 with the poorest quartile having the highest density of low learner scores (Spaull, 2013, p. 438). The wealthiest quartile, however, showed a significant difference in performance with an average score of about 700 and produced the widest range of scores compared to the other three quartiles (Spaull, 2013, p. 438). This demonstrates that there is a high level of inequality of student performance based on socioeconomic status. In addition, this study also analyzed the distribution of schooling statistics across these wealth quartiles. The following categories were measured: performance, textbooks, school factors, and home background. According to this data, students in the wealthiest schools (quartile 4) are less likely to repeat grades, more likely to purchase their own reading and mathematics textbooks, consistently complete homework, live in urban areas, and have qualified teachers (Spaull, 2013). Students from this quartile also tend to have more educated parents and have experience working on computers.

In regards to the National School Effectiveness Study (NSES) and the Annual National Assessment (ANA) assessments, both of these assessments measure performance for mathematics and reading. The national averages range from 30-35% where the average is measured as a 50% score (Spaull, 2013, p. 437). According to the Progress in International

Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) results in 2011, an international assessment comparing scores of 53 education systems throughout the world, South Africa has the lowest score of all low-income countries that participated (Spaull, 2013, p. 437). In regards to the inequality of wealth distribution in South Africa, the national averages demonstrate that the bimodality of the South African school system can be attributed to the fact that historically advantaged schools are able to produce successful student learning and cognitive skills while historically disadvantaged schools remain dysfunctional and unable to successfully implement basic student learning due to restrictions in wealth and privilege (Spaull, 2013).

Another study completed in 2011 analyzed the effect of geographic factors on the quality of public school education. This study stated that there are two main factors that determine school quality in relation to the geographical locations of income populations; spatial distribution and income (Yamauchi, 2011). The first factor is the idea that the consequences of apartheid have created constraints on the spatial distribution of income throughout South Africa. This means that the “good” schools are located in specific areas, creating homogeneity within neighborhoods and limitations in accessing “good” education for students living in low-income areas (Yamauchi, 2011). The second factor that determines school quality is the financial constraints within individual households that hinder those low-income families from being able to move into the wealthy communities. Unlike the United States and France, education in South Africa is not free; a school-fee collected from the families within the community is the main source of funding used to finance schools (Yamauchi, 2011). This study found that there is a correlation between school quality and school fee (Yamauchi, 2011). In South Africa, 5.4% of the gross domestic product (GDP) is spent on the public education system; more than any other African country (Mbeki, 2011, p. 99). Despite this, low-income families still cannot afford to

send their children to the higher quality schools, and are bound to sending their children to the school with lower school fees and higher government subsidy. Because members of these communities cannot afford to pay the school-fee, there is a decrease in the money available to fund resources for the school, thus lowering educational quality (Yamauchi, 2011).

Due to this large gap in funding, the government provides grants to specific schools and grade levels (Garcia et al., 2008). In particular, grade R receives funds on a per-learner basis and a direct grants from provisional departments in education that are used to aid teacher costs, learner support materials, teacher training, furniture, nutrition, and equipment (Garcia et al., 2008, p. 230). These grants are intended to aid the poorest 40% of schools with the poorest receiving the most funds. Within these targeted public schools, the government also funds nutrition programs for the students (Garcia et al., 2008, p. 230). Similar to the United States, the presence of malnourished and hungry students have turned many schools into establishments of health in addition to academics. Even with this government funding, there is still a massive inequality of income opportunities for schools in specific geographical areas. While about 64% of South African schools are now no-fee schools, there is still a large gap between schools in residential and urban areas (Mbeki, 2011, p. 99). Schools in residential areas, meaning areas with primarily housing and neighborhoods rather than commercial buildings, are able to charge a higher school-fee and thus attend higher quality schools.

Analysis

When comparing and analyzing each country's approach towards education based on income, it is evident that there is a clear and distinct achievement gap based on each set of data. The research for each country clearly shows a correlation between the students' wealth and

academic achievement. While the income achievement gap is known to be the difference of academic achievement of students based on socioeconomic status, it is important to remember the many other factors that contribute to this gap. Student achievement is not only based on standardized test scores, but on individual grades and student social and emotional performance. While this specific comparison focuses mainly on the results of standardized testing, it is important to keep in mind these other factors that contribute to the analysis. In addition, it is important to understand that there is a connection between socioeconomic status and other variables that affect student performance in school such as access to material resources for early learning and development, access to health care, and having a psychologically and physically safe environment to live (T. Harris, personal communication, March 12, 2015).

One of the biggest comparing points of this section is the idea of a national curriculum vs. a state curriculum. While all sets of data were collected on a national level, education systems in the United States vary by state. This includes educational curriculum, laws, and funding. This makes it difficult to grasp an accurate overview on the effect of poverty in schools because each state has specific practices when addressing the performance of these students. In South Africa and France, however, a national curriculum is used and therefore the data collected can be seen as a reflection of the whole education system. In addition, data measuring specific resources available to students could not be provided by the United States because this is determined by state funding. There is also limited data on the performance of low-income students in France; this can be attributed to France's strong principle of nationalism and universality.

Another major point to address is how each country takes a different approach towards handling the income achievement gap. The priority education zones in France and Head Start

program in the United States are both programs that offer services to these students that are necessary for their educational success. While the French priority zones are intended to intermix low-income students in with the middle and upper class schools, Title I and Head Start in the United States creates new programs that group low-income students together. However, both programs provide the students with additional resources and services that give them greater opportunity to perform at the average level. In South Africa, however, it was found that the historical consequences of apartheid created too strong of a gap between lower and upper class schools. Rather than creating a similar program to narrow this gap, a school-fee that families are required to pay in order for children to attend school was put in place, therefore creating better schools for the families with more money. Rather than providing these students with the additional resources necessary to receive an equal and quality education similar to French proximity zones and Title I, low-income families in South Africa are required give up their resources and pay a higher percentage of their family income than those living in middle and upper class communities. Therefore, the requirement of a school fee in South African sustains unequal access to education.

In each study mentioned in this section, low-income students perform at lower levels than students of middle and upper-class backgrounds, supporting the idea that low-income students have difficulty acquiring the same cultural capital as middle and upper-class students. Shim (2012) states that, as a result, success and failure in education are both a linked to socioeconomic status (Shim, 2012). With the idea that this cultural capital is present in schools, the culture of the schools themselves reflect middle-class values. Many teachers come from middle-class backgrounds, thus bringing this middle-class culture in the United States into the classroom with them without even realizing it (Viadero, 1996). In fact, the cultural capital that is acquired by

both teachers and students at home is then brought to school. When this middle-class culture collides with the culture of a low-income student, or when any two diverse cultures collide with one another, an invisible wall is formed that stands in the way of successful learning and active communication (Viadero, 1996). When this middle-class culture in schools goes unnoticed, cultural roadblocks are formed and any child being seen as lacking that particular culture is viewed as deficient or inadequate (Viadero, 1996). This deficit orientation is harmful to students and can impact their achievement. Overall, students that come from low-income backgrounds do not fit in with the middle and upper-class culture of their schools, contributing to lower student achievement than those students who already shared that middle-class culture.

Schools also sort and select students based on cultural capital because, since schools are molded around the experiences of the middle-class, they naturally teach specific, culturally bound information that overshadow individual achievement (Heath, 2011). When talking about this middle-class culture, it is important to understand what exactly is meant by difference of experience. Students coming from low-income or poverty households are more likely to experience violence in the home, exposure to drugs, parents with mental health problems, parents in prison, and unstable residency to name a few (Heath, 2010). Obstacles such as these are what hinder students from joining the middle-class culture of the schools. Lisa Delpit (1995) refers to this middle-class culture as being made up of “codes of power,” the cultural capital needed for students to be successful in school (Delpit, 1995). This dominant middle-class culture of schools supports the idea of deculturization, or the act of taking away a historically marginalized group’s culture and replacing it with a new one (Spring, 2007). In reflection to Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction, this act can be identified as symbolic violence, an act of oppression from the dominant group in order to maintain that dominance (Lee, Dunlap, & Edwards, 2014). As a

result of these dominant and inferior relationships, low-income students are given limited access to the skills needed to obtain this cultural capital. The way in which schools suppress the culture of lower-class students to replace it with the culture of the middle and upper-class highlight one of the situational factors for the income achievement gap in all three countries.

When analyzing this section, the data supports the idea that spatial distribution is linked to income level, which can then be linked back to racial segregation and current economy. In South Africa, the legacy of apartheid led to an unequal dispersion of income throughout neighborhoods, thus creating and maintaining the separation of good quality schools and low-income neighborhoods. While the income achievement gap is very much present in France, it is clearly not as defined as in South Africa and the United States. The limited variation of test scores between RAR, RSS, and all other schools in France supports the principle of universality in the education system. While there is still much inequality in French schools, the use of priority education zones shows the attempt to equally account for students from low-income communities. In the United States and South Africa, schools and programs created for these low-income students are more isolated, therefore creating the conditions for a wider gap in academic achievement. In addition, both the United States and South Africa have school nutrition programs in place for malnourished students. France, however, does not implement such programs because a significantly smaller number of students live in poverty and the level of income distribution is significantly higher than that of the United States and South Africa.

Overall, this section highlights a vital point; the income achievement gap is not just an issue of quality of education. It links together the history and condition of the national economy and the income achievement gap in each country. While income clearly has a powerful effect on student achievement, the only way to close this gap is by analyzing and understanding the origins

of segregation that led to this inequality. This means that the “funds of knowledge” a child acquires at home should be incorporated into the classroom, rather than having students adjust to fit into the cultural capital of the teachers and school (Conteh & Riasat, 2014). The term “funds of knowledge” refers to the strategies that are historically developed and practiced by a child that allow them to engage in activities in the home and community contexts (Conteh & Riasat, 2014). By understanding the “funds of knowledge” that a child brings into the classroom, the teacher will be able to build relationships between the school, the community, and the home. Each country comes from a specific background in segregation, which has led each country into its current situation. This section, however, shows that the income achievement gap cannot be closed by a single solution; all cultural factors that play into the current inequality of income must be addressed and understood to even begin on a pathway to change. Therefore, the unique historical and cultural factors of each country need be understood to provide potentially effective solutions to the income achievement gap.

B. Racial/Ethnic Minority Students

The United States

In the United States, racial diversity is growing at a rapid pace and addressing this diversity has become a demanding task for teachers. In fact, the number of white students enrolled in public schools in the United States decreased from 60% to 52% and is expected to continue decreasing to 45% by 2023 (The National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). While white students remain the majority, the number of African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian American students in public schools are rapidly increasing. Because of this, it is becoming more important that teachers are aware of and understand the factors that contribute to the racial achievement gap and how to address them in the classroom.

In the 2011 National Center for Education Statistics report, scores were given for the average mathematics and reading scores for students based on these categories. In the sample taken for mathematics, there was a total of 209,000 students coming from approximately 8,500 schools throughout the country and the reading sample came from a total of 213,100 students also from 8,500 schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, p. 6-7). Tables 1 and 2 show the total percentage of students in each group and the corresponding average scores in both mathematics and reading. According to this data, white students made up 54% of both representative samples while Hispanic students made up the highest percentage of all minority groups. Asian students only made up 5% of the representative sample and had the highest average score in both the mathematics and reading assessment. This data shows us that white students scored higher than all but one of the other racial/ethnic groups and Black and Hispanic students were among the lowest scoring groups in both mathematics and reading. This highlights the clear presence of a gap in student achievement based on race/ethnicity.

Table 1: Percentages and average math scores for racial/ethnic groups in 2011, Grade 4

Race/ethnicity	Percentage of students	Average score
White	54	249
Black	15	224
Hispanic	22	229
Asian	5	257
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	225
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	#	236
Two or more races	2	245

Rounds to zero.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, (2011). Findings in brief: Reading and mathematics 2011.

Table 2: Percentages and average reading scores for racial/ethnic groups in 2011, Grade 4

Race/ethnicity	Percentage of students	Average score
White	54	231
Black	15	205
Hispanic	22	206
Asian	5	236
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	202
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	#	216
Two or more races	2	227

Rounds to zero.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, (2011). Findings in brief: Reading and mathematics 2011.

When analyzing data based on race/ethnicity, it is important to remember the other factors that affect these outcomes, such as students with limited English proficiency (LEP) and English language learners (ELL). Reports of the achievement gap based on race/ethnicity can be misleading if LEP students are not taken into account (Terwilliger & Magnuson, 2005). In a study completed in 2008, percentage distributions of first time public school kindergartners were grouped by language-minority status and race/ethnicity. Out of a sample of 7,130 students

entering Kindergarten in public schools, each ethnic group was broken down into language minority status (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Between the 57% of white students and 16% of Black students, only about one percent were classified as English language learners (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008, p. 2). Out of the 2.4% of Asian students, 6.3% were classified as English language learners (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008, p. 2). Finally, out of the 19.8% of Hispanic students, 91.9% were identified as English language learners (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008, p. 2). This data shows that out of all the Hispanic students, almost all of them spoke English as a second language. This illustrates the growing number of racial minority students that also need extra support to learn and understand English. In order to give these students the supports they need for success, teachers must recognize the connection between race and language and be prepared to address this issue from a culturally responsive perspective.

This data shows that the gap in student performance based on race/ethnicity is also connected to differences in language, therefore showing that students who come from racial/ethnic minority groups and language minority groups are at a stronger disadvantage than those only part of one minority group. When reflecting back on the history of racial segregation in the United States, it is evident that segregation left a legacy of inequality that still lingers today. This illustrates how the policies and practice in the schooling system have not successfully eliminated this legacy of racial inequality.

France

In the case of France, data on the effect of race/ethnicity on student achievement is much more difficult to present. As stated in Section II, France holds strong to its principle of

universality and strict equal education for all citizens. In addition to this, France's deep-rooted presence of immigration allows us to analyze the effects of immigrant students on academic achievement. According to a study completed by in 2011, ethnic categories of French citizens can be grouped into two categories; North-African (Maghreb) and South European (Boado, 2008). Those of North African descent include children of Algerian, Moroccan, and Tunisian origin while those of South European descent include Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish origin (Boado, 2011). In a study completed in 1995, the student performance was measured based on the migrant status of students. In order to successfully analyze this data, the structure of the categorization of immigrants must be explained in this context. In France, the migrant status of students can be broken down into four groups based on the origin of the students' parents; Native-born French, first-generation immigrant (child and parents are immigrants), second-generation immigrant (parents are immigrants and child is born in France) and mixed (either father or mother is an immigrant) (Boado, 2008, para. 10).

In this study, the average grade for mathematics and French were recorded for each of these groups (Table 3). These scores come from the national assessment taken immediately after the CM2 cycle of schooling. This data comes from the 1995 and 1989 French Panels of Students in Secondary Education with an overall sample of 18,730 students who had completed the CM2 cycle of schooling by the end of the 1994-1995 school year (Boado, 2008). From this sample, 81.5% were native-French, 1.8% were first-generation, 8.5% were second generation, and 8.2% were mixed (Boado, 2008, para. 10). In reference to ethnicity rather than migrant status, 83.9% of students from this sample were French, 11.5% were North African, and 4.6% were Southern European (Boado, 2008, para. 13). Unlike the United States, an overwhelming majority of students in this study were fluent in the country's native language.

From this data, it can be concluded that in mathematics, children classified as either first or second generation immigrants received a significantly lower average grade than that of Native French and mixed students. In French, only Native-French students scored significantly higher than the all other groups, while the remaining three all generated relatively close average grades. Therefore, immigration status and ethnic identity have a clear impact on student achievement. In addition, this data shows language has a significant impact on student achievement. French born students scored significantly higher in France than any of the other students. When looking back to the history of racial segregation in France, this segregation was defined in terms of immigrant status and those who immigrated to France faced many hardships and isolation. This data can be connected back to this because it is evident that immigration status has an effect on student achievement. Overall, this section highlights that, although it is less obvious than the United States, the idea that race/ethnicity has an effect on student performance.

Table 3: Average grade in mathematics and French in 1995 across migration status

	Mathematics	French
French	66.4 (17.1)	68.8 (16.2)
1 st generation immigrant	55.5 (19.7)	58.7 (19.8)
2 nd generation immigrant	55.3 (17.8)	59.3 (16.7)
Child of mixed couple	65.9 (17.2)	59.3 (16.7)

The standard deviation is given in parentheses next to the average score.

Source: Boado, H. C. (2008) Do immigrant –origin students progress faster at school? The case of France. *Population*, (63), 651-667.

South Africa

In South Africa, race is divided into four categories; black African, Coloured, Indian/Asian, and White (Statistics South Africa, 2003). The identification of a person into one

of these racial categories can be attributed to language and national origin (Treiman, 2007). White can be divided into English-speaking Whites and those of Dutch descent who speak Afrikaans, the third most common language spoken in South Africa. The Coloured population is made up of those of mixed race or descendants of slaves owned by Dutch settlers while Africans identify as coming from native South African parents. Of the total population of about 54,000,000 people, about 80% are black African, nine percent Coloured, three percent Indian/Asian, and eight percent white (Statistics South Africa, 2014, p. 3). Due to South Africa's history of racial discrimination under apartheid, the education system supports the idea of "race-blindness" within schools, meaning race should not be a factor in how one is treated at school (Fiske & Ladd, 2005). Therefore, membership of a specific racial group is based on self-classification rather than a legal definition (Statistics South Africa, 2003).

In addition, data compiled from the ANA, PIRLS, and SAMEQ national assessments are organized based on primary language of the student rather than race or ethnicity (Dowse, Howie, Staden, Tshele, & Zimmerman, 2012). According to the PIRLS 2011 report, there are 11 official languages spoken in South Africa and only 9.6% of people speak English as their first language (Dowse et al., 2012, p. 9). The most common language is isiZulu, spoken by about 23% of the population, followed by isiXhosa and Afrikaans (Dowse et al., 2012, p. 9). In a study completed in 2011, the scores of students tested in each language were compared. This came from a sample of 15,744 students across 92 different schools (Dowse et al., 2012, p. 6). Of the 11 languages which students were tested, those who spoke English or Afrikaans produced the highest scores and had the fewest students who did not reach the benchmark. Out of all the students who tested in African languages, about 25-50% could not achieve the standard international benchmark. This means that of all the students who tested in an African language, 25-50% of them

demonstrated they could not read. When analyzing this data, it is important to note that while 71% of these students tested in the same language as the language spoken at home, 29% tested in a language that was different than the language spoken at home (Dowse et al., 2012, p. 31). In each language, less than 25% of the students spoke a different language at home (Dowse et al., 2012, p. 31). The greatest exception was in the English test; of all the students who took the test in English, 70% spoke an African language at home (Dowse et al., 2012, p. 31). This shows that, although many students tested in English, English is not their native language. This is an example of how schools sort and select students based on the dominant culture. However, this is much different in South Africa than in the United States and France because white people do not make up the majority. This shows that, when addressing the racial achievement gap, race is not the only factor that must be considered. The country's history of segregation in education as well as spoken language must be contextualized when analyzing the achievement gap.

Similar to that of the United States, there is a clear connection between student performance based on race and student performance based on language. These overlaps indicate that when analyzing the racial achievement gap, it is critical to take into account the role that language plays on test scores. In addition, although white students make up the racial minority, they produced the highest scores on the test. Therefore, racial minority students are not the ones who are disadvantaged; it is the non-white students. The legacy of apartheid is also clearly reflected in this data with English-speakers generating the highest scores on the assessment than all other South African languages. Therefore, this data shows that racial identity and language have a strong impact on student performance on tests.

Analysis

One of the most evident differences in the research presented for all three countries is the way in which students are classified in national assessments. In the United States, students are clearly classified by their race while France and South Africa use other distinctions to classify students based on their ethnic background. The reasoning behind this can be attributed to each country's outlook and values towards racial separation that is deeply embedded in its history. In the United States, racial diversity in schools is growing at a rapid pace and citizens are pushed to not only encourage this diversity but to incorporate these differences in every activities. Since the desegregation of schools from *Brown v. Board of Education*, minorities and their white allies have been pushing for equal rights and have challenged the idea of assimilation into the mainstream white American society. Despite this, the structure of schools not only in the United States, but in France and South Africa as well, are engaging in the deculturalization of public schools. Joel Spring (2007) states that language is an important part of culture, and therefore forcing students to learn through a curriculum that centers around the language of the dominant culture is an act of linguistic and cultural genocide.

In France, the principle of universality has created a push to eliminate students being defined by their racial identity. It must be noted that, due to this, there was limited research available that addressed the effect of race on student achievement. As opposed to the United States and South Africa, spoken language in France does not have a prominent effect on student achievement since a majority of students speak French as their first language. This shows that language plays a strong role in the assimilation of people into French culture. While this is an example of deculturalization, it is also an example of how French schools have become the site of this assimilation by promoting the dominant French culture onto students. In South Africa,

the elimination of classifying by race for national assessments is a reflection of how the legacy of apartheid has paved way for the shift in policies and laws for the new democracy. This decision can be seen as impeding the narrowing of the racial achievement gap because the issue itself is being overlooked.

Another vital piece of evidence to be acknowledged is that, while whites make up the majority in the United States and France, white statistically do not represent the majority in South Africa. In the United States and France, it is the racial minorities that currently struggle in receiving equal access and equal quality education. In South Africa however, the eight percent of the population classified as white continue to live in the higher quality neighborhoods and attend higher quality schools. Due to the legacy of apartheid, races remained geographically separated and thus the advantaged schools continued to serve the white population. Schools that serve mainly black African students continue to struggle with inadequate facilities, underqualified teachers, and a shortage of teaching materials. This shows that structural inequality is deeply embedded within this system. Government policy and social practice have created a means for the minority population to access the majority of resources meant to hamper the efforts of raising revenue from school fees.

From this analysis, it is shown that the racial minority does not always produce lower scores on national assessments. In the data compiled from the United States, the Asian category achieved the highest scores in both reading and math over the white majority. This pattern has created the idea that Asian-American are the “model minority”, which opens an entire new door on the issue of stereotypes (E. Brantmeier, personal communication, March 17, 2015). It is also clear, however, that the historical background of racial segregation in each country has not only had an impact on student achievement, but on the data that is presented on behalf of each

country. In South Africa, the comparison between the scores of students identified as White and Asian cannot be analyzed because it is not made known what language those students who identify as Asian in South Africa speak. In France, student achievement is measured by immigrant status rather than race which allows for a much larger point to be made; race does not play an equal role in the assessment of student achievement in these three countries. This means that racial identity is not the only factor that contributes to the racial achievement gap; other factors include immigrant status, language, and ethnic identity. Therefore, the racial achievement gap must be analyzed with all these factors in mind. While these three countries measure and assess the impact of race on student achievement based on different factors, there is still a clear divide between racial majority and minority groups on student performance

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates how the history of racial segregation and current socioeconomic factors shape the system of schooling thus impacting student performance in the United States, France, and South Africa. Based on the data and analysis presented, there is a clear achievement gap for low-income students and students of racial minorities in all three countries. Despite the policies and practice that have been put in place to address this achievement gap, low-income and non-white students still struggle to gain the cultural capital that is needed in order to have equal access to a quality education. Because of the vast differences in the policies and practices put in place in an effort to close the achievement gap, the comparative analysis of these three countries serves as a small-scale representation of why educational equality continues to be an issue in many countries all over the world; schooling systems reflect the culture of power and if a student does not have access to that culture of power, they struggle to receive an equal and quality education. After analyzing the foundation and roots of this achievement gap for the United States, France, and South Africa, the following questions can be answered; How useful is standardized testing when analyzing student achievement? Can the achievement gap be closed? What do we do about it now?

As discussed earlier, each country has made efforts to close the achievement gap and promote more equal access to education through No Child Left Behind, Head Start programs, and Race to the Top in the United States, proximity zones and allocation of government funding in France, and the idea of race-blindness and no-fee schools in South Africa to name a few. Despite these efforts, however, educational inequality persists with no legitimate solution, making it evident that the racial and complex achievement gaps require much deeper and comprehensive investigation. This leads into the question of whether or not standardized testing

across countries is a useful determinant in comparing student achievement. For example, the PIRLS national assessment in 2006 compared the percentage of students who scored below the international benchmark across 41 countries, including the United States, France and South Africa. South Africa ranked as having the most students fail at meeting the benchmark at 78%, while both the United States and France fell towards the middle having only four percent not meet the benchmark (Mbeki, 2011, p. 105). The findings of this paper, however, question whether the results of this assessment are a fair basis for determining which countries have the highest performing students because each country is made up of students who have different cultural experiences. Each of the 41 countries, the United States, France, and South Africa specifically, face unique circumstances in which their education systems are still recovering from their historical legacies of inequality. Therefore, populations within these countries do not start from equal footing; some countries are able to better overcome barriers of inequality based on historical roots of oppression built into schools while others are still resolving the issues that were established far beyond their control.

To tackle the role of education policy in closing the achievement gap, it must be recognized that these policies must address and support students and their cultural identities. In France, the banning of the headscarf is an example of a policy that demotes culturally responsive education because it shows how the schools are forcing students to assimilate to the dominant culture. Policies such as “race-blindness” in South Africa and the classification of students by immigration status rather than race are policies that promote the idea that the issue of race should be simply covered up. This issue of race, however, is very much a factor in educational performance and should therefore not only be acknowledged, but should be respected. In addition, policies such as the banning of headscarf in France pose the issue of the difference

between “equal” and “fair”. No Child Left Behind ensures that all students receive equal supports and aims at providing equal resources to schools. However, the growing diversity in schools brings forward the idea that all students do not need the same supports, they simply need access to the same supports. All students do not come from the same culture and therefore the same policies and values that are implemented towards one student are not necessarily the same policies and values that should be implemented towards all students. Therefore, policies must be created that recognize that not all students respond to the one intervention in the same way.

With this in mind, the question of whether the attainment of cultural capital is the responsibility of the student or the school comes into play. According to the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, the education system is the vessel that creates the political and moral structure of schools (Brown, Forde, & Richards, 2006). This idea should not only be applied in the United States, but in France and South Africa as well. In order to make this structure culturally responsive, the following three areas must be changed: the way the administrative policies handle diversity, the policies and procedures that affect the supports for diverse students, and the ways in which families and communities can be involved in the schools (Brown et al., 2006). Understanding the barriers and limitations that these countries face in providing equal education for low-income and racial minority students allows for teachers and institutions to motivate themselves and their students to work towards changing their perspective of diversity by giving the opportunity for all students to achieve to their full potential in school. With this in mind, there are specific teaching strategies that teachers can use to create classrooms to begin on a pathway to change. To begin, one of the most crucial strategies is recognizing that a student’s socioeconomic status or race does not determine their success in school. Many teachers focus on these differences and assume that these students will have difficulty keeping up

with the other students (Delpit, 1992). This, however, is not a problem with the student but rather a problem with the teaching. Teachers must personally get to know their students and be familiar with their lives outside of school and, after knowing this, find a way to teach to their strengths. In addition, teachers must also be able to teach and distribute resources fairly among all students.

With this being said, a study completed in 2009 concluded that one of the biggest effects on student learning is the ability of the teacher to learn from his or her own teaching as well as the students, and be able to reflect that new cultural knowledge back on the students (Hattie, 2009). Out of 138 influences on student achievement, socioeconomic status ranked 32nd for effect on learning and the student having a positive view on their own ethnicity ranked 84th (Hattie, 2009, p. 297-299). While it is evident that these two factors play a large role on student achievement, this study highlights that it is not these factors alone that cause them to rank lower than expected. It is a combination of those factors with the effectiveness of the teacher's influence on student learning. To ensure students are successfully learning in school, regardless of socioeconomic status or race, both teaching and learning must be visible; meaning that the teacher sets specific goals that are appropriately challenging, forms positive student-teacher relationships, and provides feedback in a reciprocal loop that moves the student and teacher. Overall, the teacher must create a learning environment that contains active, passionate, and engaging people contributing to the act of learning. According to this same study, the number one effect on student learning is the student's expectations of their own success based on past experiences in learning (Hattie, 2009, p. 44). This confirms that it is the teacher's responsibility to provide positive support, encouragement, and reinforcement to each individual student to allow all students the opportunity to foster confidence in themselves and their future.

While this thesis focuses on the attainment of cultural capital, other forms of capital, such as social capital (social networks and relationships) and economic capital (economic resources and money) can be acquired by individuals in an effort to move up in societal importance (Jaeger, 2009). Lisa Delpit (1995) talks about how, although the playing field is not even, students can still learn new ways of thinking and acting in order to gain the capital needed to be academically successful in school. To begin understanding how cultural capital can be applied to education, one must first understand how socialization histories influence individuals to think, reason, and act in certain ways (Shim, 2012, p. 211). According to Bourdieu, “What people say, what they do not say, how they label and judge others, and what educators assume in intercultural education is not so much a matter of personal choice applied in situated ways but rather effects of the socially and historically derived dispositions that each individual brings to local activity” (Shim, 2012, p. 211). This means that socialization patterns do not come from individual decisions, they come from the history and values of society as a whole. While those students who learn and value these dispositions from an early age clearly have an advantage for success in the cultural context of schools, there are still ways in which teachers can teach students how to obtain the cultural capital needed to be successful.

Despite this, children can be taught to be part of this culture of power. They must be taught that, while their own cultural values and language are unique and should be appreciated; there is a political game of power at hand (Delpit, 1995). In this sense, schools have become a vessel for sorting and selecting students through their societal status, however this process can be broken if students are taught how to successfully engage in these “political games of power” at the same time as maintaining a positive ethnic/cultural identity. So, this comes back to the underlying question: What should we do? While laws, policy, practices, and new sciences have

found better ways to track and record the inequalities in education, it has failed to get rid of them (Viadero, 1996). If any type of drastic change is to happen, it does not lie in the hands of the elite or the government; it must happen on individual, interpersonal, institutional, societal, and structural levels. In order to embark on a path to narrow the racial and income achievement gap, the focus should not only be on what policies and programs should be implemented, but on this in combination with acquiring a basic understanding of who we are as people (Delpit, 1995). This means recognizing ways in which we are connected to one another, ways we are disconnected, and how to understand diversity through a culturally responsive perspective.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), inclusion is not an issue of mainstreaming children of marginalized groups into the school system. Instead, inclusion focuses on how to reform education systems and learning environments to meet the diverse needs of all students (United Nations Educational, 2005). This thesis highlights that there is no single approach that can be made to close the racial and class achievement gap. Instead, a multi-layered approach towards changing the system of education must be enacted in order to make meaningful progress towards ensuring equal access and quality education for all. This includes a reform in policy, practice, resource distribution, student-teacher relationships, and overall attitude towards diversity.

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