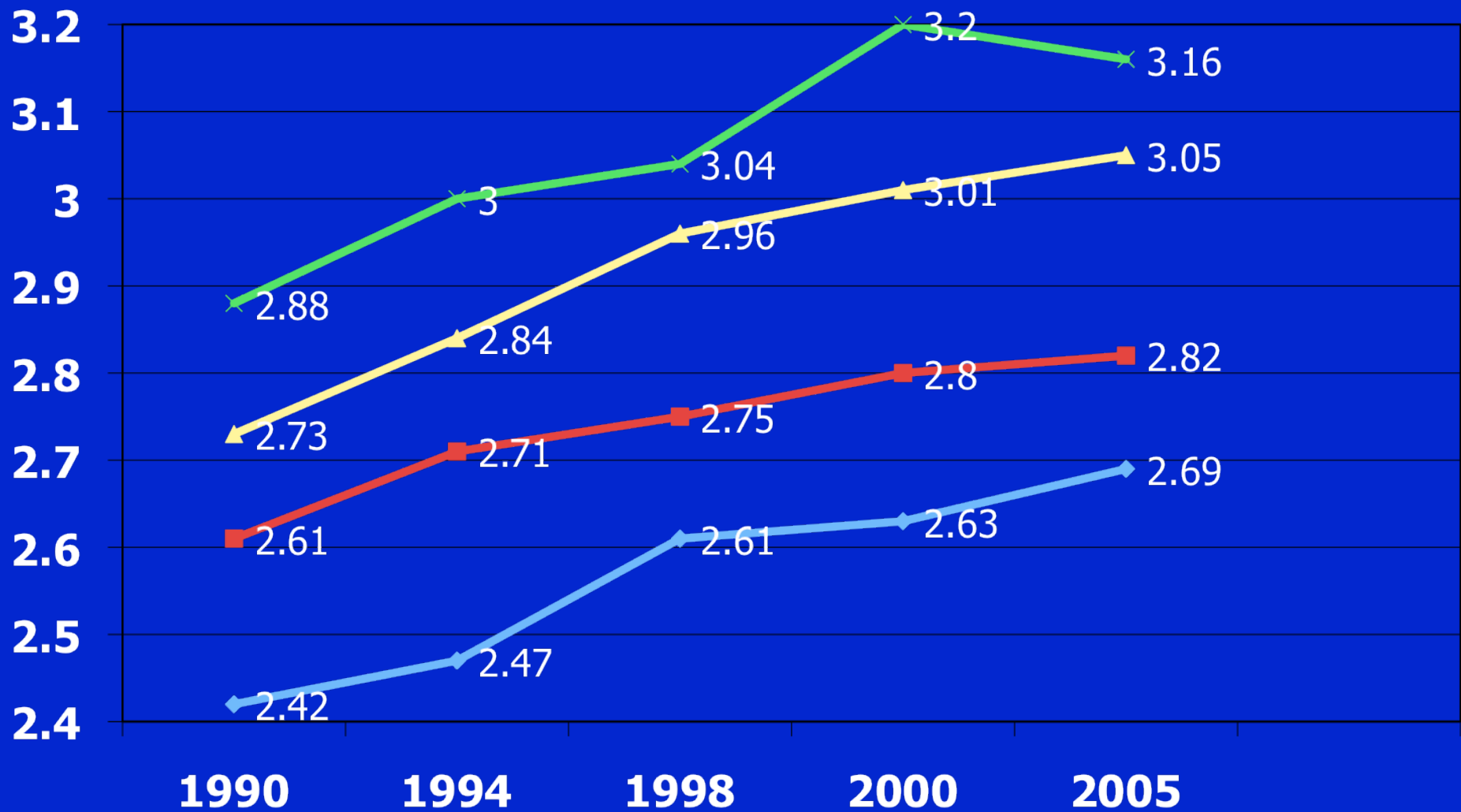


Despite The Best Intentions: Why Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools

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Trends in GPAs of graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1990-2005

◆ **Black** ■ **Hispanic** ▲ **White** ✕ **Asian/PI**

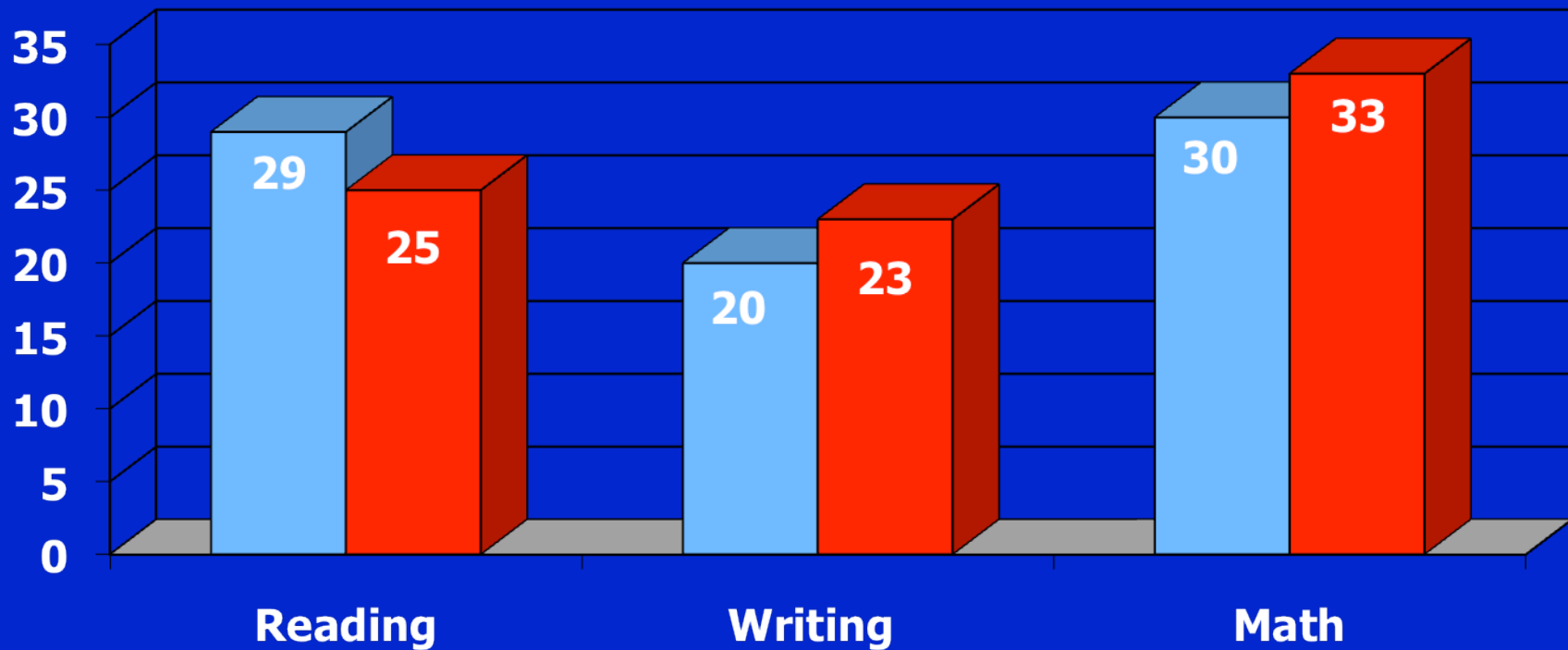


Source: Dept of Ed, IES, NCES HS Transcript Study

White/Black Gap in NAEP Scores

■ 4th Grade Gap

■ 12th Grade Gap

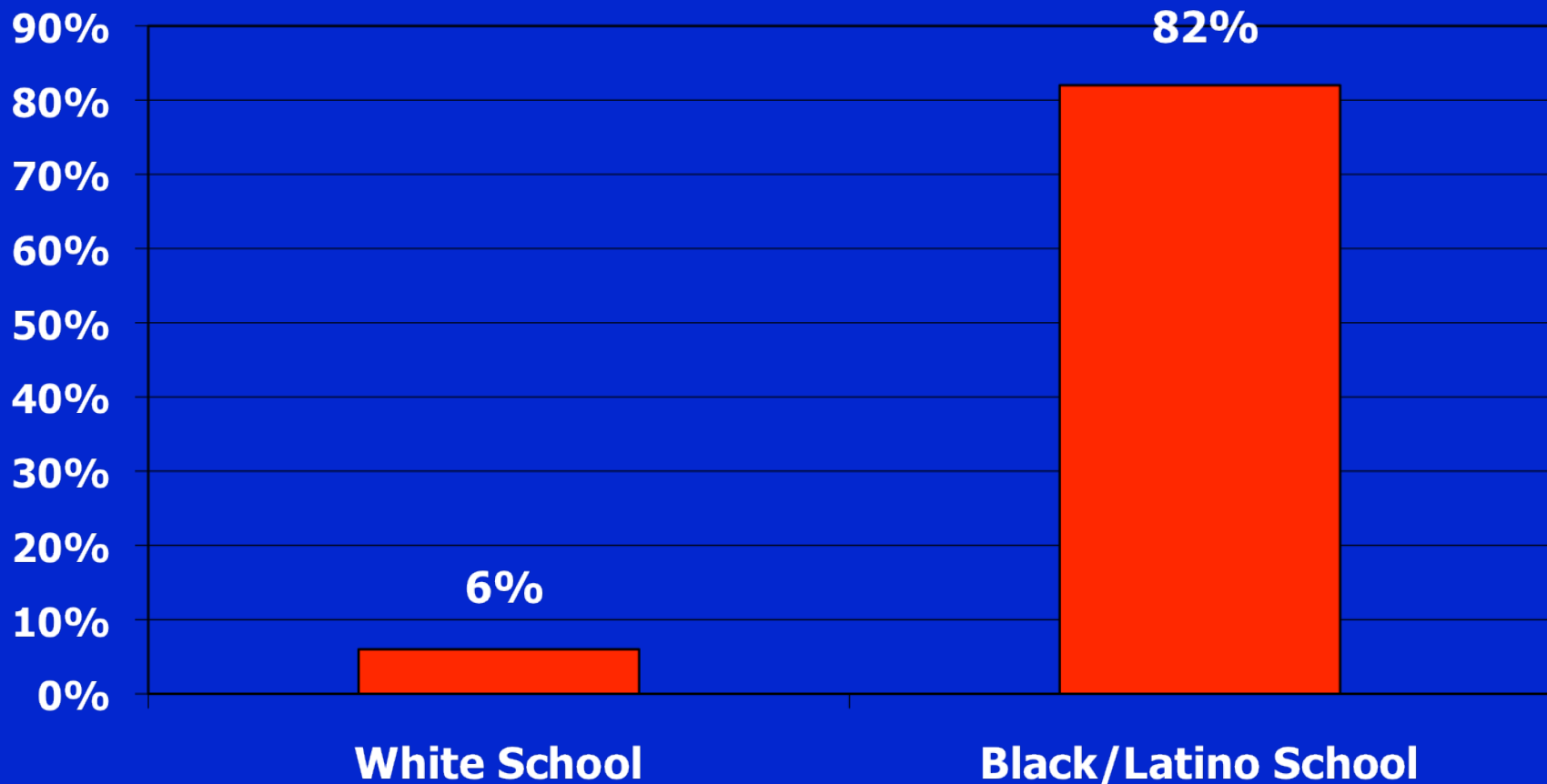


What Accounts for Achievement Gap?

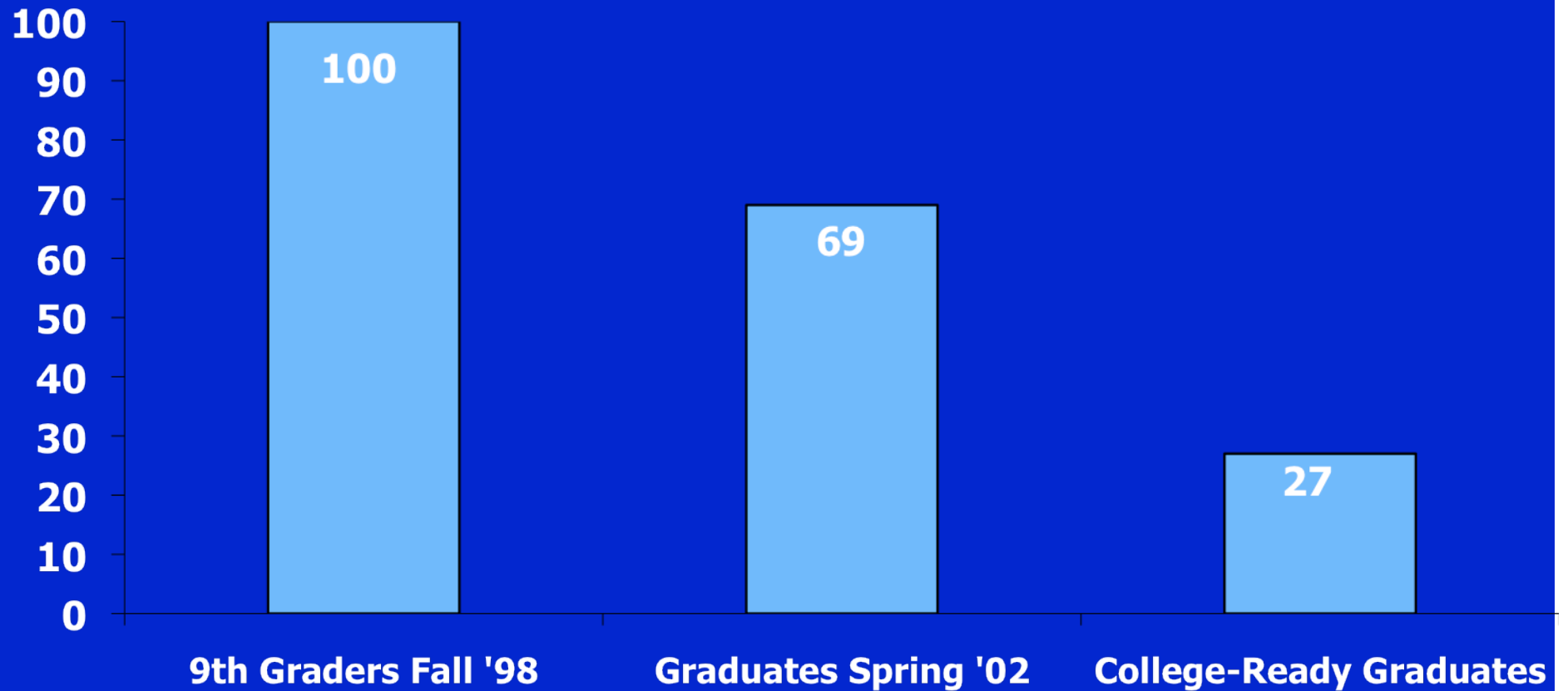
Resource Deficits

- Majority Black and Latino schools more likely to have:
 - Shortages of textbooks
 - Poor quality instructional materials
 - Fewer AP courses
 - Overcrowding

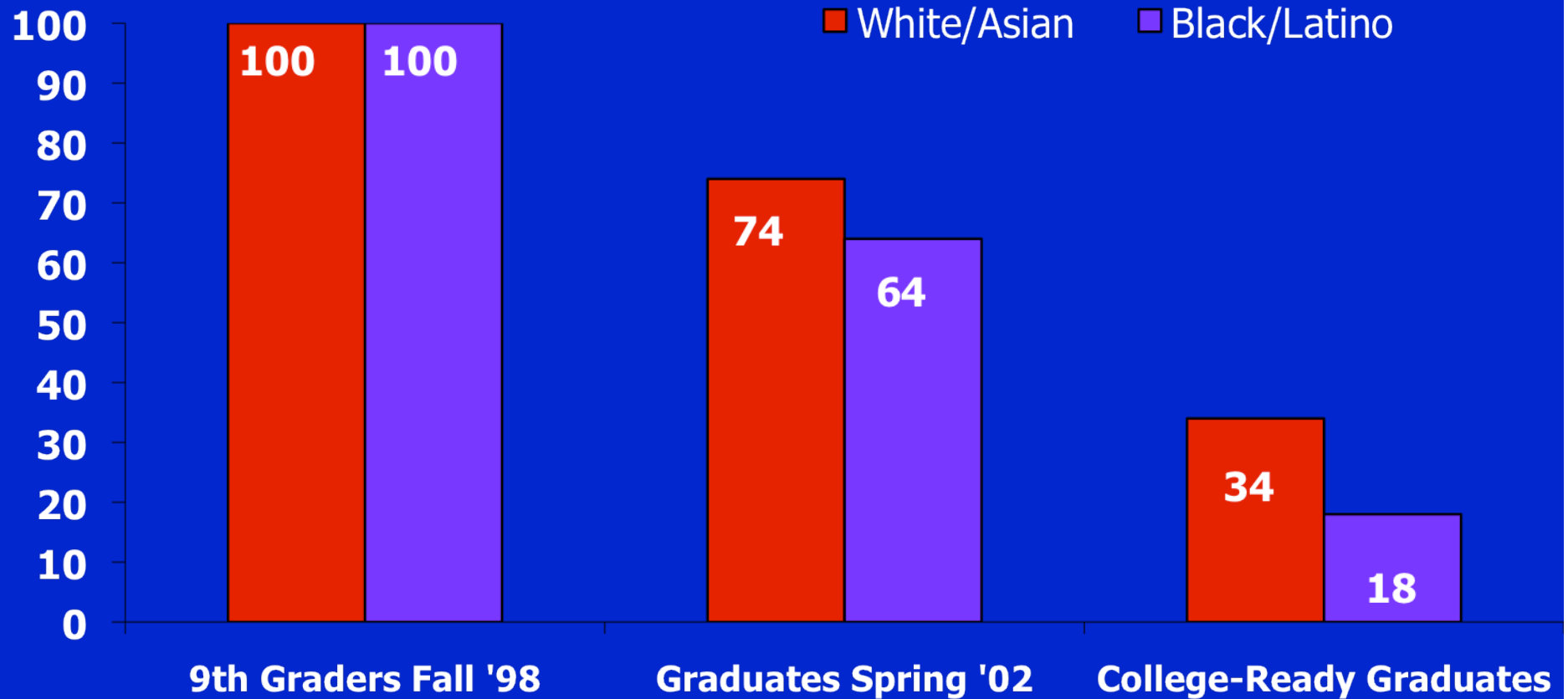
Percent Concentrated Poverty by Race of School



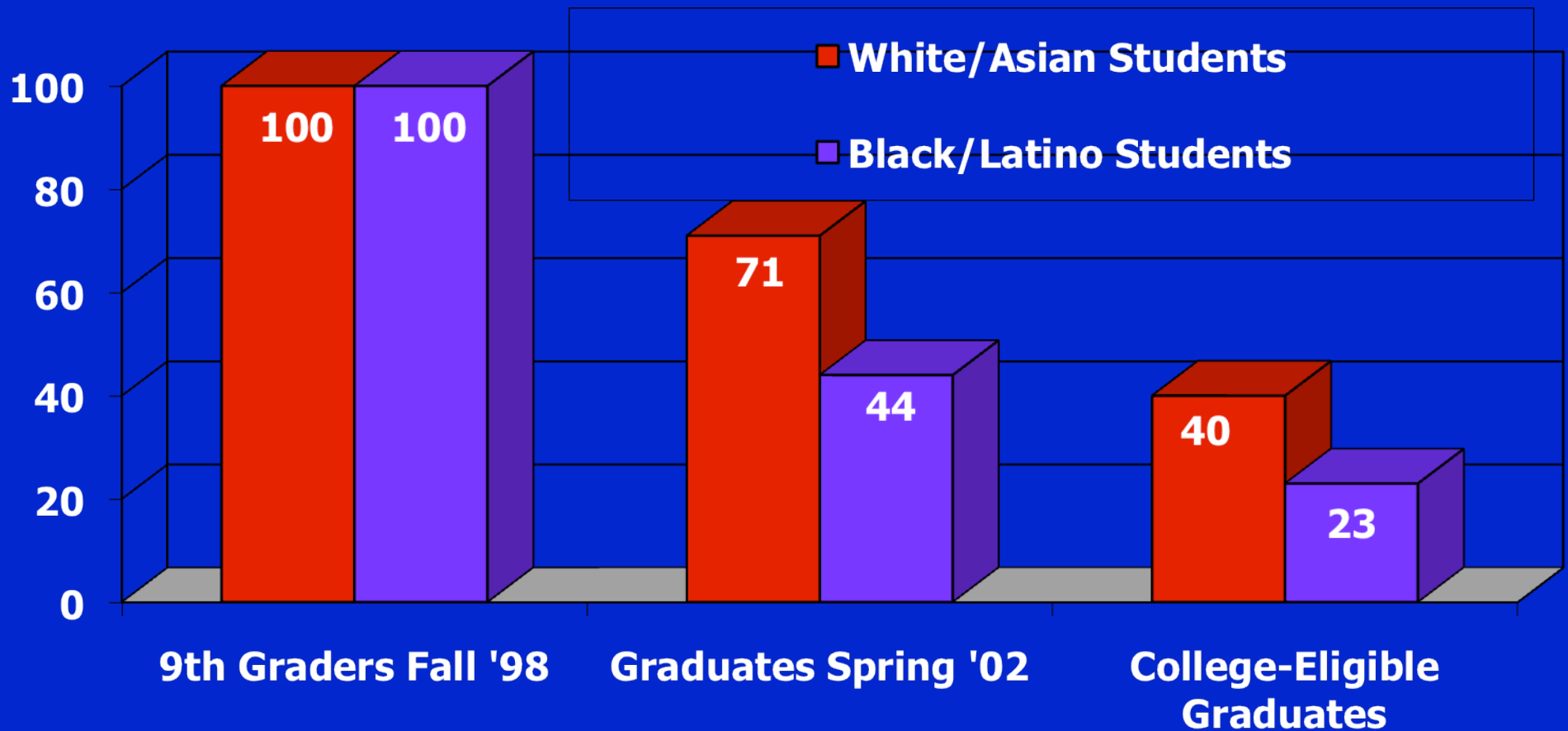
California's College Opportunity Ratio



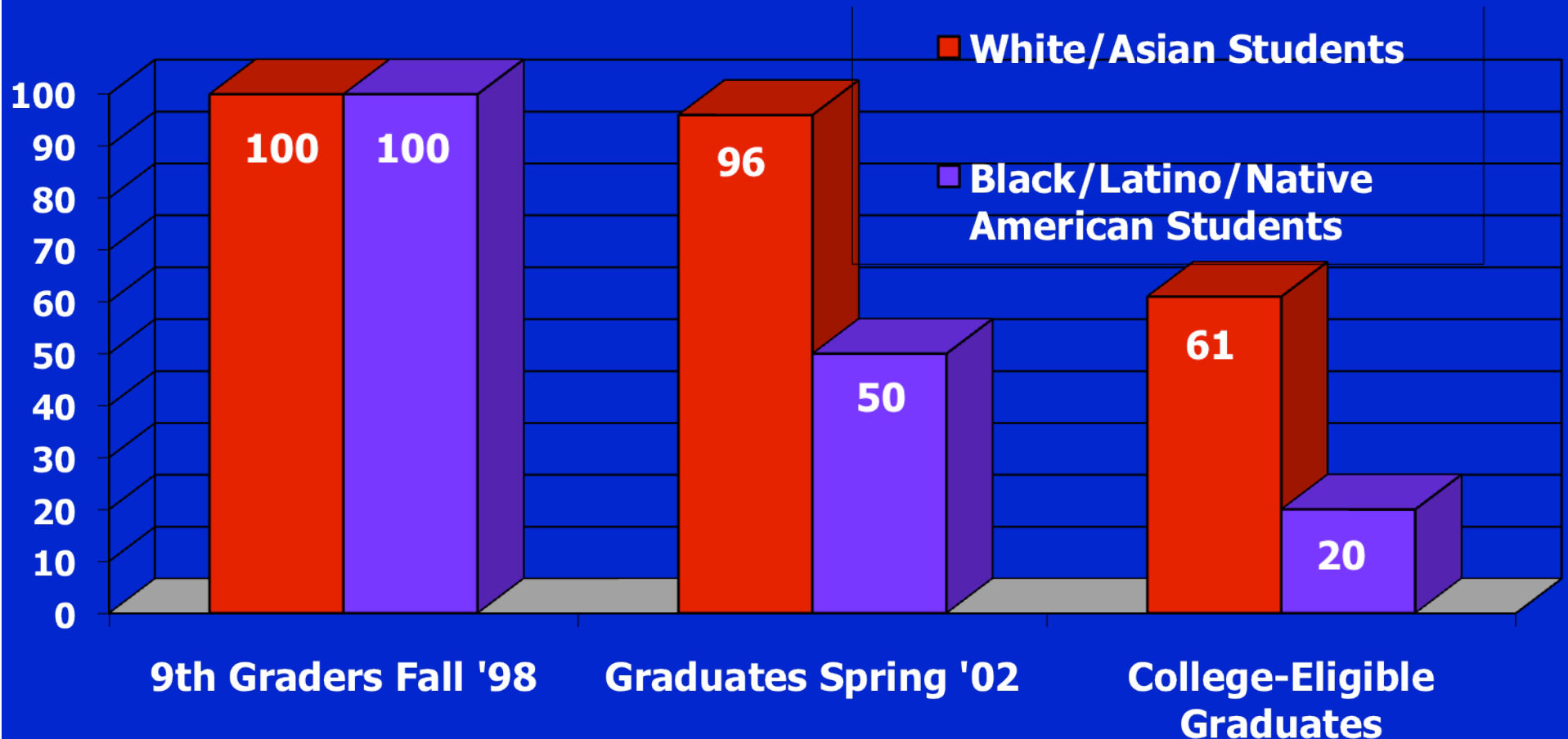
California's College Opportunity Ratio by Race and Ethnicity



The Tale of Two California Schools: School A COR



The Tale of Two California Schools: School B COR



What Else Might Account for
Achievement Gap?

Oppositional Culture Theory

Ogbu (1978; 1990; 1991)

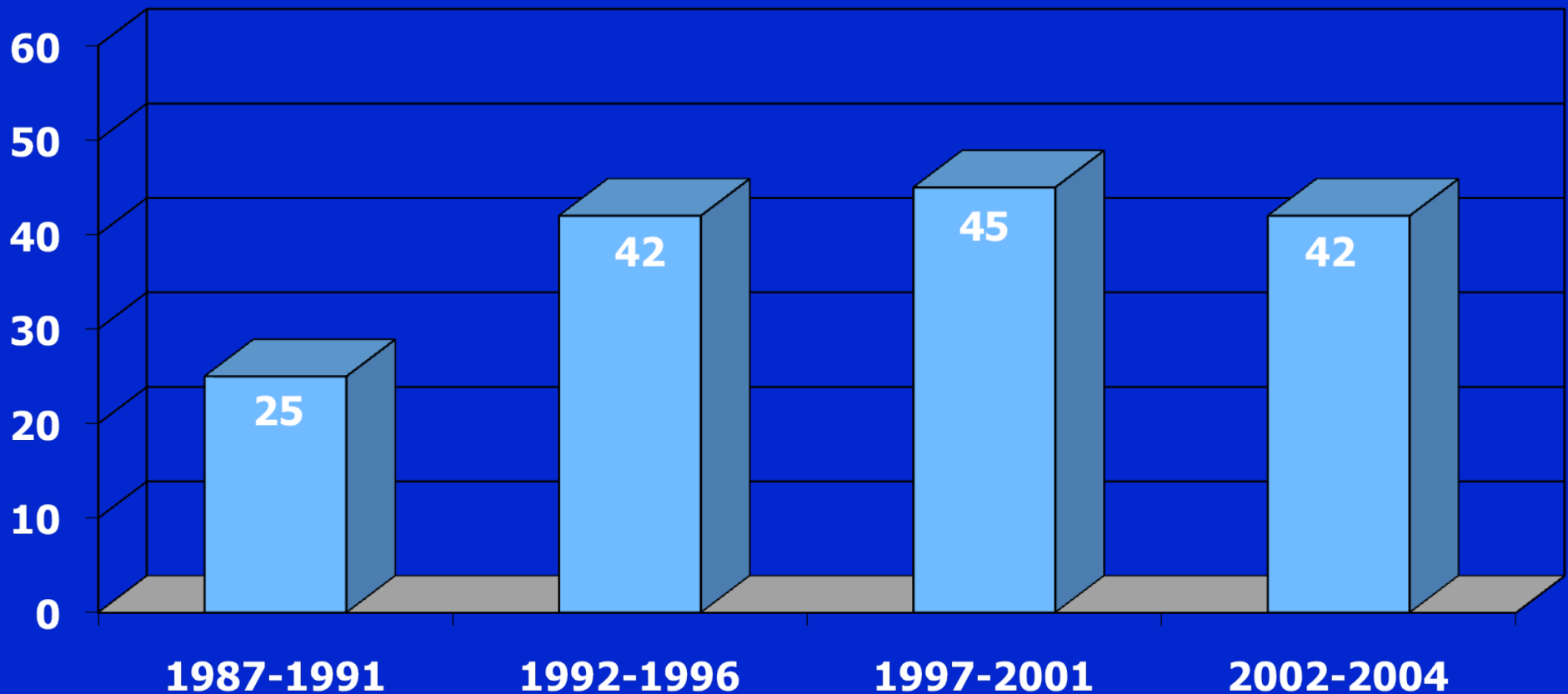
As opposed to voluntary minorities who are optimistic about their chances for success, involuntary minorities (Blacks, Mexican Americans, Native Americans) recognize their position of structural inequality vis-à-vis dominant group (whites). In response to this they develop an oppositional orientation toward dominant institutions (e.g., schools), disengage from them, and limit their effort to succeed in them.

“Burden of acting White” Hypothesis

(Fordham and Ogbu 1986)

African American students identify school as a “white” institution and accuse peers who strive to do well in school of “acting white.” Thus, they discourage their peers from achieving.

Number of Popular Press Articles Referencing the “Acting White” Hypothesis 1987-2004



“Go into any inner-city neighborhood, and folks will ... tell you that parents need to parent, that children can't learn unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television and **eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white.**”



Barak Obama, Democratic National Convention, 2004

“Some African-American students unable to extricate themselves from the quicksand of self-defeat, have adopted the incredibly stupid tactic of harassing fellow blacks who have the temerity to take their studies seriously. According to the poisonous logic of the harassers, any attempt at acquiring knowledge is a form of "acting white," and that, of course is to be shunned at all costs.

Bob Herbert, New York Times, 1995



“And there is the inescapable reality that hitting the books, essential to making it in medicine (or any other profession), is often mocked as ‘acting white’ – an anti-education mindset that some leading black figures, like the comedian Bill Cosby, have attacked in recent years as fostering a culture of failure.”

– Clyde Haberman, New York Times,
November 17, 2006



Limited Evidence for Oppositional Culture

- African American students (as a group) are no less engaged in school than are their white peers (Carter 2005; Harris 2006; Tyson, Darity and Castellino 2005)
- Black students want to attend college at the same rate, spend about the same amount of time on homework, and have similar rates of absenteeism when compared to whites of the same social class (Cook and Ludwig 1998).
- High-achieving African American are among the most popular (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Downey and Ainsworth-Darnell 2002).
- Some recent research finds moderate support for “acting white hypothesis” but only in racially integrated schools with high levels of racialized tracking (Fryer 2006; Tyson et al. 2005)

Today

- Examine oppositional culture theory in integrated, affluent suburb
- Also explore institutional dynamics and determinants

“In our search for the solution to the problems of educational inequality, our focus was almost exclusively on the characteristics of the children themselves. We looked for sources of educational failure in their homes, their neighborhoods, their language, their cultures, even in their genes. In all our searching we almost entirely overlooked the possibility that what happens *within* schools might contribute to unequal educational opportunities and outcomes.”

Jeannie Oakes 1985. *Keeping Track*: xiv



Riverview School Demographics: 2005 – 2006

	Students		Teachers	
White	1,471	46.5%	166	73.8%
Black/ African American	1,193	37.7%	46	20.6%
Hispanic	314	9.9%	8	3.6%
Asian / Pacific Islander	95	3.0%	5	2.0%
Native American	6	0.2%	0	0.0%
Multiracial/Ethnic	85	2.7%	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	3,164	100.0%	225	100.0%

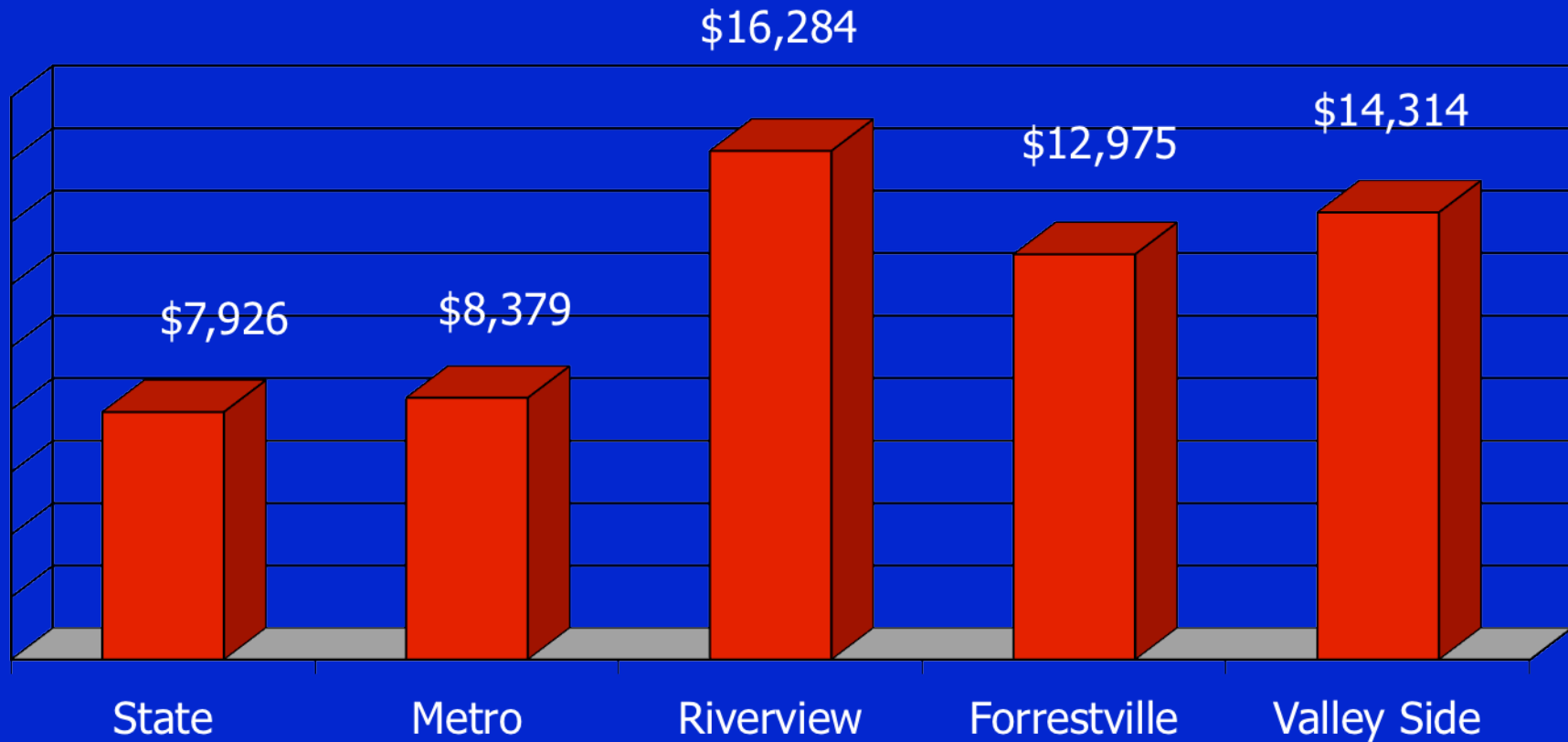
Source: Riverview School Report Card 2006

Riverview Graduation Rates, 2005 – 2006

	Riverview	Metro	State
White	96.6%	79.0%	92.3%
Black/ African American	88.6%	73.9%	78.3%
Hispanic	70.8%	70.7%	77.1%
Asian / Pacific Islander	87.5%	85.7	94.1%
Native American	n/a	77.1	80.5%
Multiracial/Ethnic	85.2%	n/a	88.2%

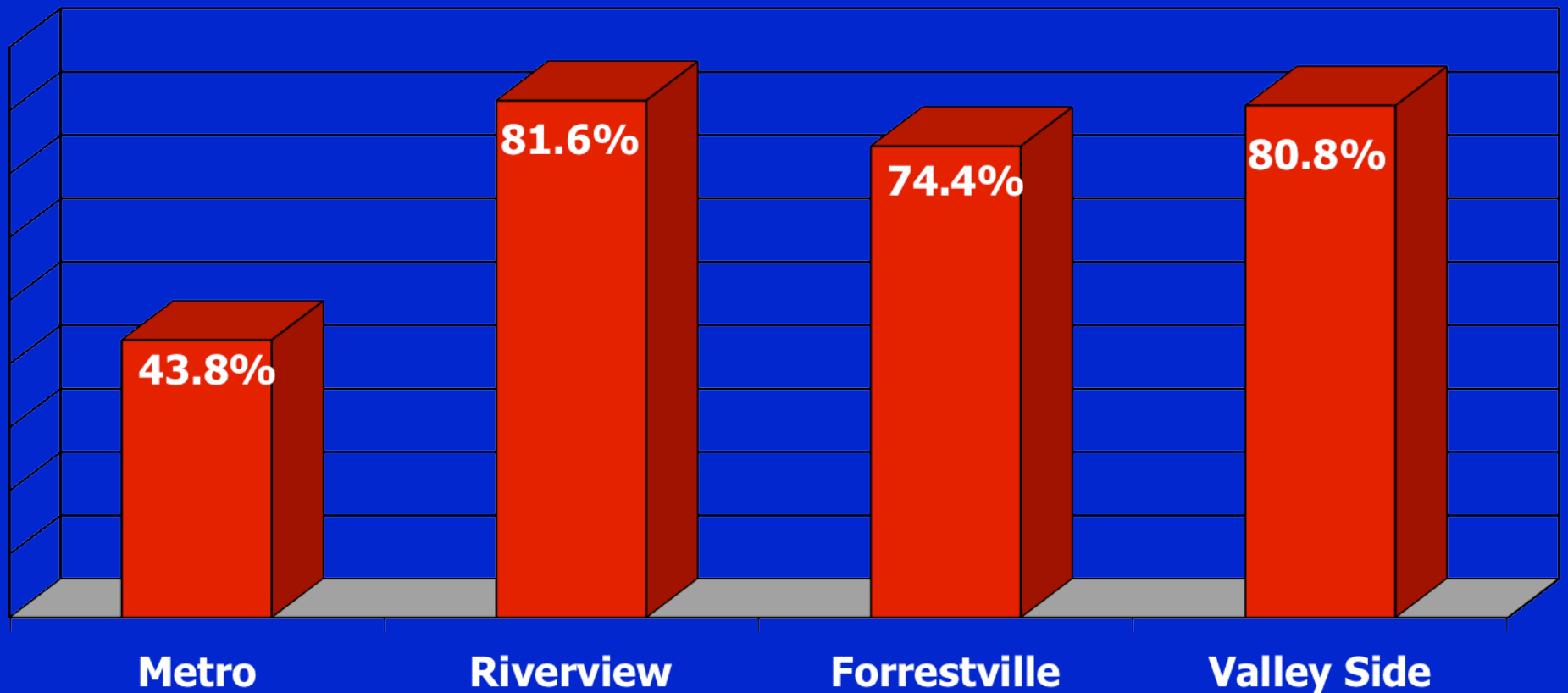
Source: Riverview School Report Card 2006

Operating Expenditures Per Pupil Statewide, City, and Suburbs, 2002



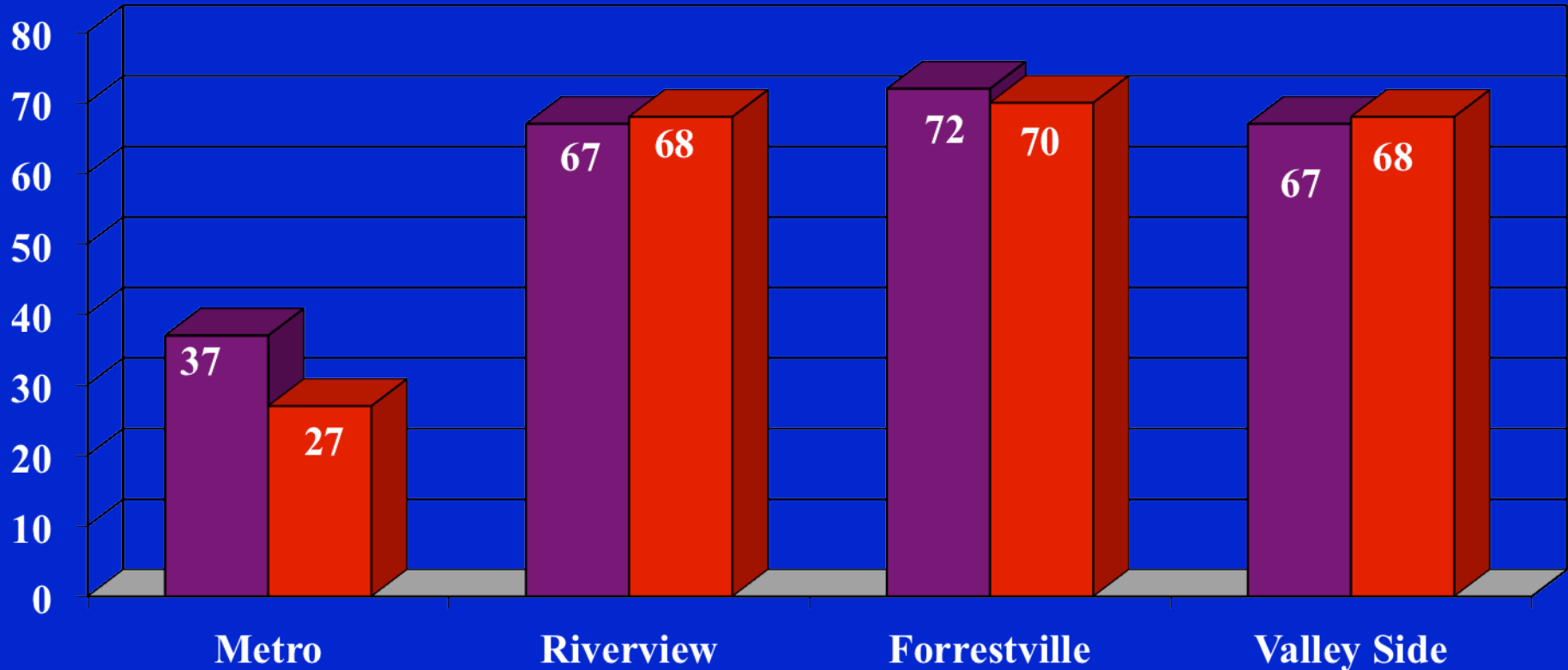
Measure of Teacher Quality: City/Suburb Differentials

■ % Teachers With MA degree or greater



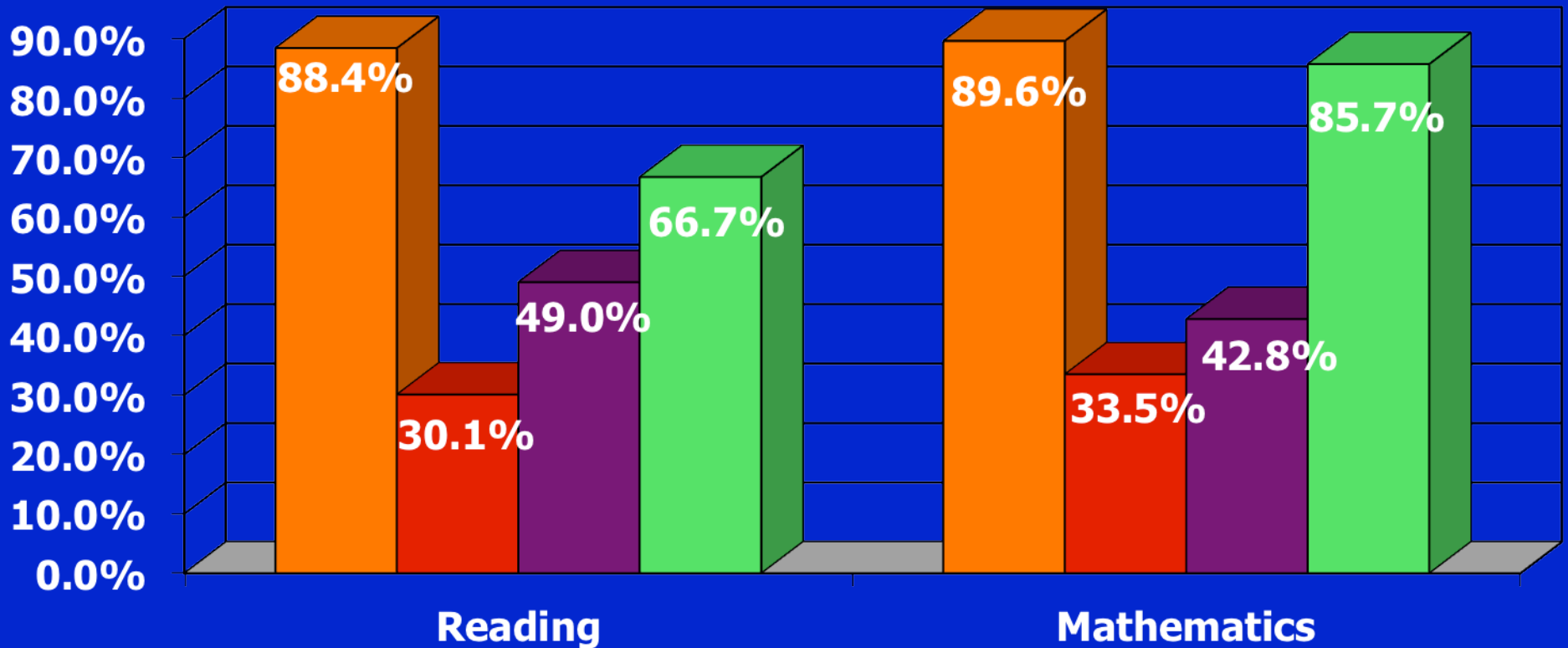
11th Graders Meeting or Exceeding Reading and Math Standards in Four Metro School Districts

■ Reading ■ Math



11th Graders Meeting or Exceeding Math and Reading Standards on State Achievement Exam (Prairie State Achievement Test 2005-06)

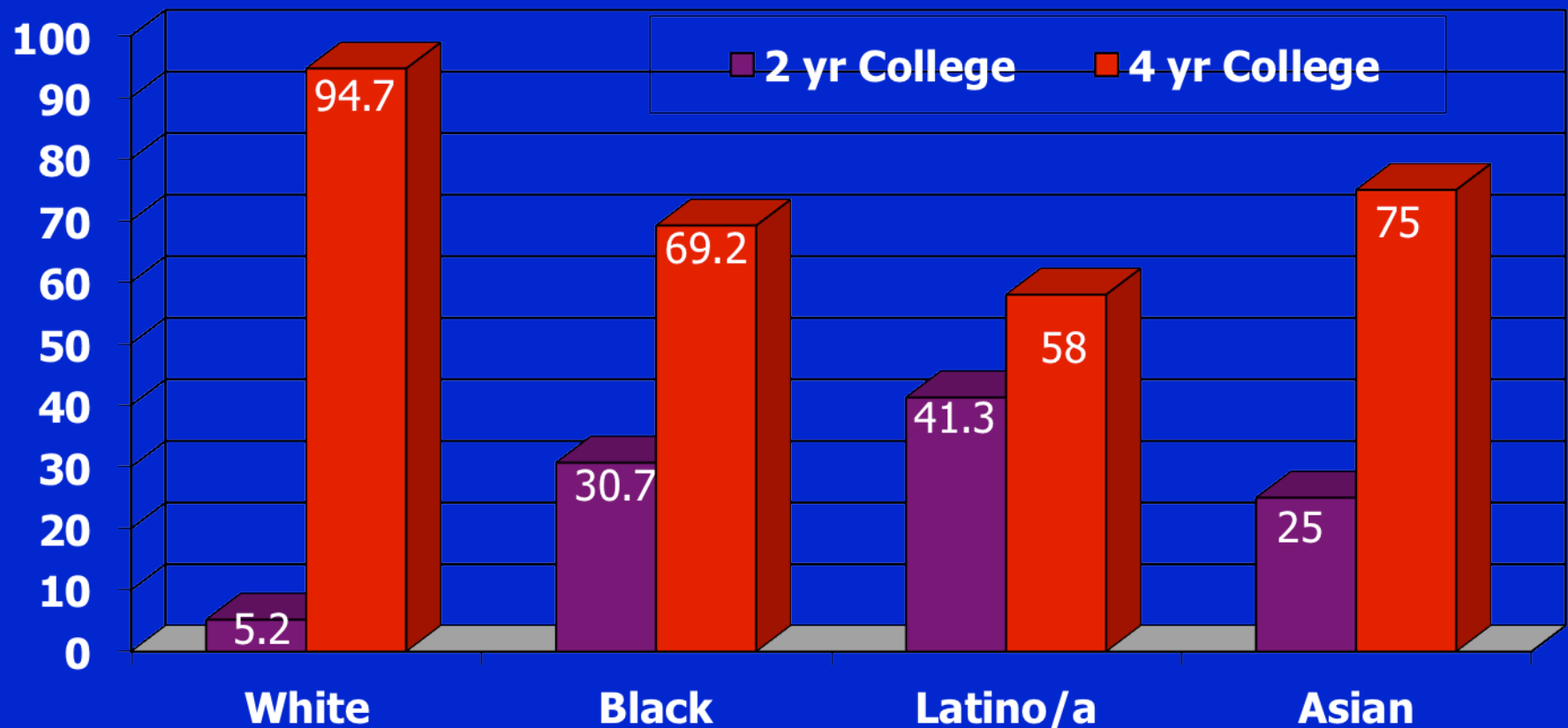
White Black Latino Asian-PI



Racial Gaps in Achievement at Riverview: Composite ACT Scores

Racial/Ethnic Group	School	National
White	26.5	22.0
African American	18.2	17.1
Latino/a	18.8	18.6

Percentage of Riverview Graduates Attending 2 or 4 year Colleges by Race/Ethnicity



Why Riverview?

- Integrated suburb – long-term, stable, voluntary integration
- presents opportunity to study **best case scenario** (liberal community with expressed commitment to diversity, voluntary desegregation)
- Serves relatively affluent minority population
- Also reflects growing demographic reality -- Latino/a and African American Population in Suburbs

Data

- The Suburban School Achievement Study
(with John Diamond)
- Multi-racial sample of community members from one affluent suburb in Midwest
 - 170 + Interviews (students, teachers, administrators, staff, and parents)
- Survey data from 40,000 students across 15 suburban school districts including Riverview

Examining achievement differences

- Explore oppositional culture and “acting white”
- According to Tyson (2002; 2005), for oppositional culture to explain the gap, several criteria must be satisfied. Teasing or peer pressure must be:
 - Race specific
 - Pervasive
 - Linked to achievement related behaviors

Race, Peer Dynamics and Achievement

- Among the students and staff we interviewed all reported that students – across the GPA continuum – want to do well and have educational aspirations that extended beyond high school.

“nowadays you can’t do ‘nothing without going to college”

Oppositional culture?

- Most Black students recognize that racism persists and will make their efforts to succeed more difficult.
- **BUT** does not discourage school engagement
- maintain high educational aspirations

Perceptions of Discrimination Beyond School

It's always a negative or a disadvantage to be being black and [its] always been like that, and I don't really think it's going to change that much...black people probably have to work harder to be whatever they want to be.
(Keisha, 10th grade Black student)

Perceptions of Discrimination Beyond School

In a way just in the world that we live in being black, it's gonna always ... be hard just because of the color of your skin. No matter where you go, you say [this] isn't a racist city or country; it's always gonna be hard being black. Point blank.

(Tyrone, 10th grade Black student)

Burden of Acting White?

- Most report not a big issue at Riverview
- Some negative peer pressure
- But as previous research has found – mostly non-racial in nature
- Students and staff report that negative peer pressure is often because students feel bad for not doing well themselves

“Non-racial” teasing

Paul: He gets teased about it. He's on the baseball team, so he gets heckled a lot you know at practice.

I: Because he gets good grades?

Paul: No because everybody gets good grades. It's the way he talks, and how he seems like he's a smart Alec. ... Like stats, he'll like memorize and you know, always talks about them. So nobody wants to hear that. And it's like, “shut up.”

–Paul, middle-class White Sophomore (3.0 GPA)

If you fit the stereotype...glasses, you know, suspenders and calculator in your hand, yeah.

–Terrence middle-class Black sophomore (3.5 GPA)

Sources of Teasing of High Achievers

“probably because they’ re not doing anything so they try to discourage other people from doing stuff. Then they won’ t feel like the only ones left out.”

Tasha, low-achieving Black student

“Why do I think they do that? Well, maybe because they don’ t want you to do better than them or, because they don’ t want to do anything and misery loves company.”

Rhonda, high-achieving Black student

Teasing for poor performance

...you know how some people walk with they papers in their hand from the last class and they have like a low grade on something, they couldn't do it as well but they tried, and like some people get like a 95 on the chemistry quiz, somebody else get like a 63. The person that got the 95 is the one that's always putting you down. "You got a 63, you stupid." Stuff like that, come on, I mean childish stuff. I don't have time for it.

Daryl, Low-achieving Black student

Support for Achievement

INTERVIEWER: Do you and your friends discuss each other's grades? how do those conversations go?

KEISHA: Like if it's a bad grade, we'll just tell each other do work and if you need help like we can help each other. And like if you get good grades, you just tell them to keep up what they're doing.

INTERVIEWER: What value do your friends place on studying hard and getting good grades?

KEISHA: Well they put that pretty much first...Hopefully be able to go to college.

(Keisha, low-achieving Black sophomore)

Oppositional Culture?

	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Mixed Race	Total
% who agree: “My friends make fun of people who try to do well in school.”	13%	18%	17%	20%	16%	15%
% who agree: “Studying a lot tends to make you less popular.”	15%	12%	13%	23%	14%	15%
% who say friends think it is “very important” or “important to study hard to get good grades	92%	95%	89%	92%	90%	92%

Source: Ferguson, R. F. (2002). What Doesn't Meet the Eye: Understanding and Addressing Racial Disparities in High Achieving Suburban Schools. North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

Riverview peer dynamics

- Students value high achievement and want it for themselves
- Teasing tends to be non-racial and is often directed to low-achievers as well as high-achievers
- Teasing of high achievers seems to be not “oppositional” as much as about students feeling bad about own poor performance
- Little support for Oppositional Culture or Burden of Acting White Hypothesis

What Else Might Account for
Achievement Gap?

Institutional and Everyday Discrimination

- Institutional Discrimination
 - Highly racialized school practices and structures
 - Tracking
 - Discipline
 - Payoff for racialized resources in school outcomes
 - Cultural capital
 - Social networks
- Everyday/Interpersonal Discrimination
 - Racial stereotypes and race based performance expectations

“it’ s like two ships
traveling in parallel
lives”

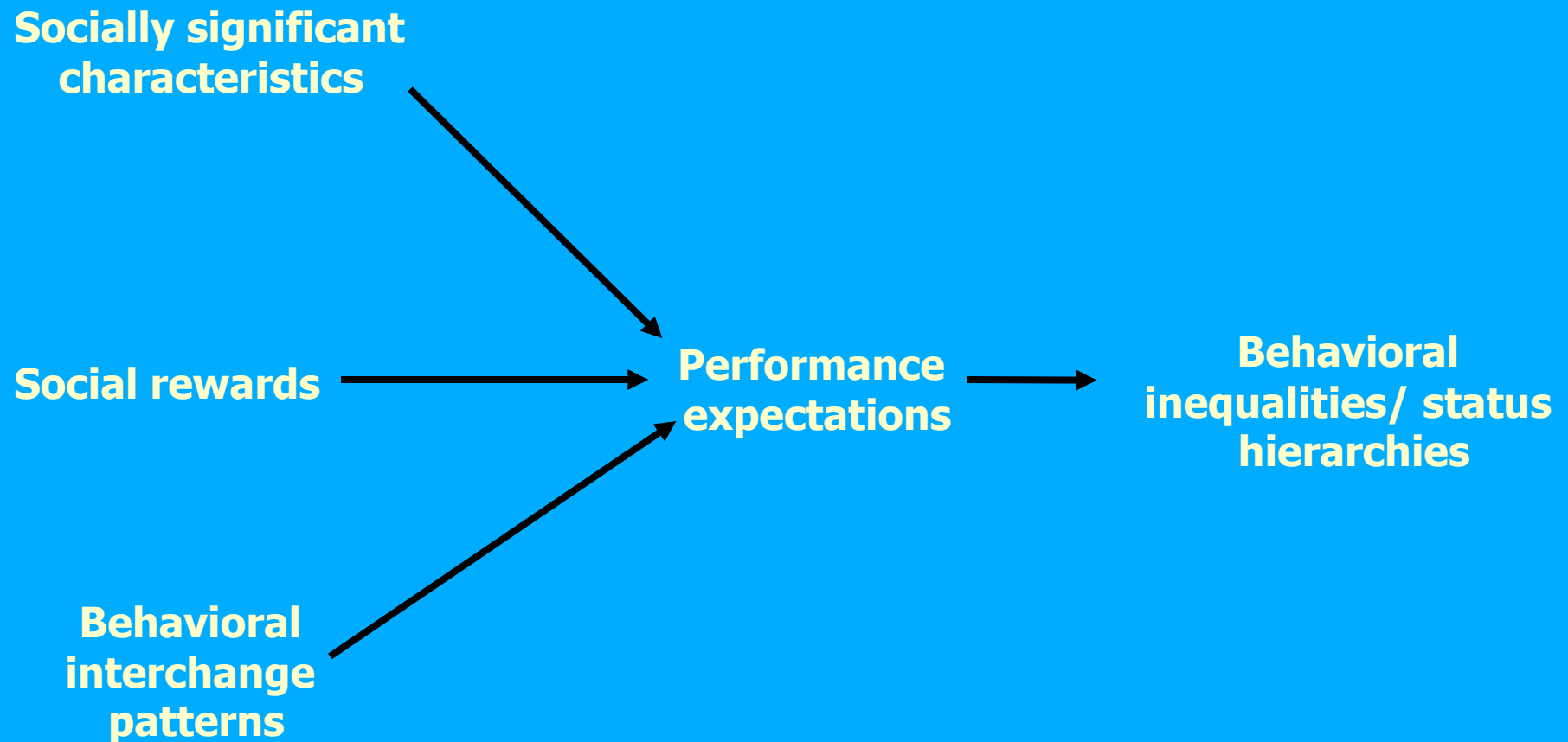
Actual and Anticipated Parent Intervention

“I know that you’ re going to call me every day...[so] I’ m going to advocate for that kid” (Ms. Hicks, teacher)

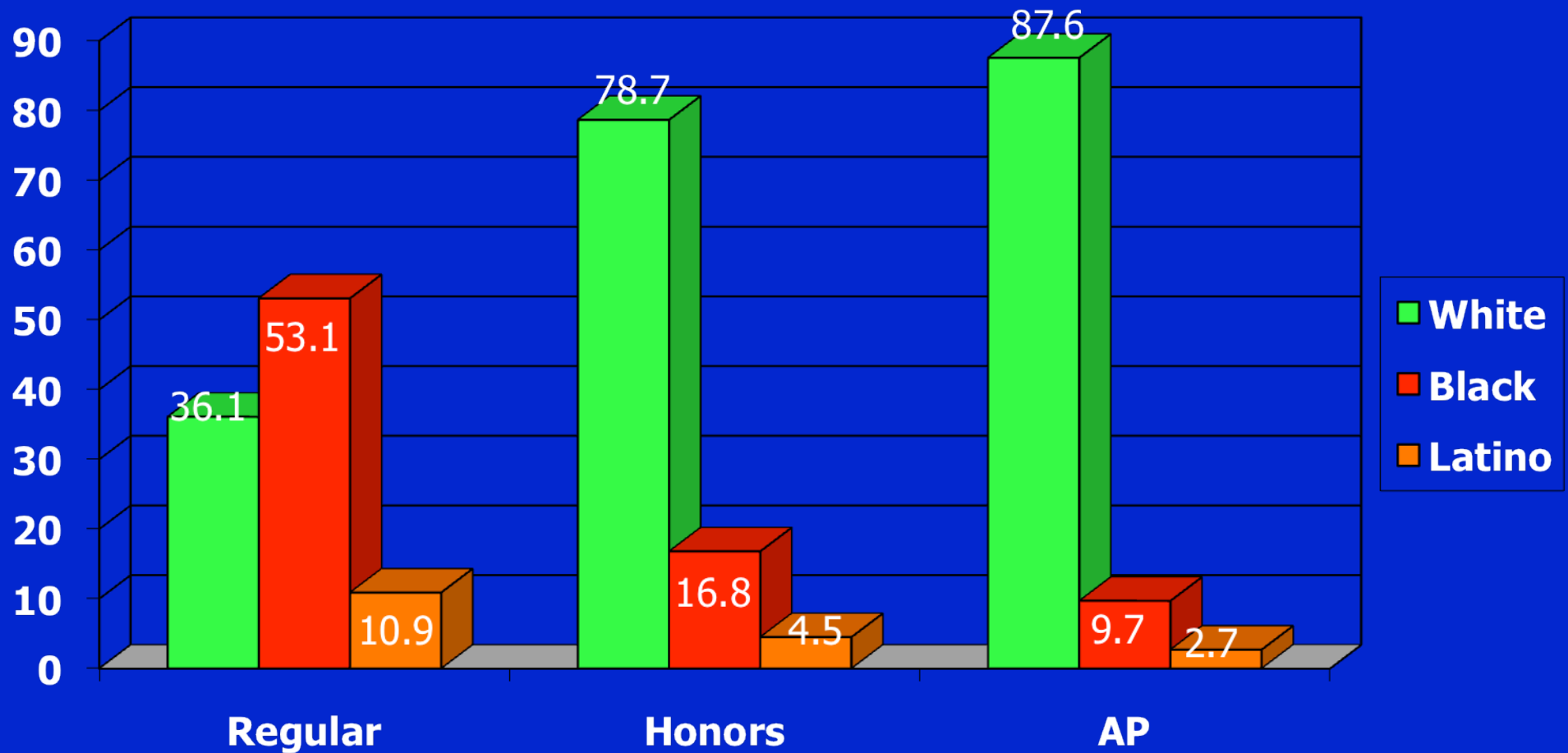
“When there’ s a student and they know the parent is gonna get involved, it tends to be a different process” (Mr. Clark, school safety officer)

The formation of performance expectations and status hierarchies

(From: Correll and Ridgeway 2003)



Percentage of Riverview Students Across Tracks by Race



Race and Tracking

“The fact is that Riverview is two schools in one. There is the honors white school, and then there’s the other school.”

(Julius, upper middle-class Black junior - 4.1 GPA)

“Richard: I mean if you look at the numbers, I’m betting there are more white kids that are in the honors classes, and more black kids that are in minority classes.”

(Richard, upper middle-class White sophomore - GPA 3.7)

“do they talk about racial dynamics? Yes. They will tell you that they know when they have mistakenly walked into a regulars class.”

Darleen, mother of two white Riverview Students

There was a teacher who had a minority student come into their honors class and you know he was your “stereotypical baggy jeans, big shirt, hat turned sideways” you know, and she said to him, “You know I think you belong in my next period, you’re too early” and assumed that he was a general student. And he’s like “No, no my schedule says I belong here.”

Ms. Christy, Teacher

Racialization of Achievement

I'm white, so I'm expected to be smarter. Usually, when someone sees me, they always think I'm smarter than most people. ...I think that usually the perception is ... that Black people are dumber than White people and Hispanics are not as smart as everyone else. ... So if you have a really smart Black person, that's when you see the most, "That's weird." In one of my classes, there's one black kid in the entire class; there's zero Hispanics. It's all just white people. And that's, it's weird.

– Gabe, upper-middle class White 3.2 GPA

Consequences for performance expectations

Well, there's been times where I've been in classes with white kids, and I tried my best at times. When I do, the white girls, they're always going in their own little clique, and look at the Mexicans as if we were dumb or something. It just makes us feel bad.

(Maria, Latina 10th grade student)

They [teachers] don't expect much from black males, like you know – cause like I was looking at the percentage of our grades and stuff, the black males, we're like at the bottom. Our grades are the lowest. They don't expect nothing of us

(Daryl, African American 10th grade student)

Consequences for performance expectations

Well, if you are a student of color, could be an African-American student or Latino, There are assumptions that you don't care about school, that you don't have the capability of being successful in school. And so those are negative messages that they have to deal with every day.

(Ms. Tyson, teacher)

JOAN CRISTY: if a new kid comes in the class and they're any other...race, [kids will say] "You don't belong here. This is the black class." ...And they'll hang outside in the hallways until after the bell. And it's not because they're trying to be to be a jerk and push the limits, it's because they don't want to be identified.

INTERVIEWER: They don't want people to know they're coming in this room?

JOAN CRISTY: Um hum (affirmative). And I don't think it's just because of Special Ed, I also think it has to do with race and just like see we're all put in a box. And that's because they're not fortunate to be in a lot of classes where they're all mixed. They don't see that just because of the *nature of things*. But they kind of... "it's black and we're dumb." So something has been taught, something has gone to them through their educational experience which is just so painful. You know? And yet – then on the other side, you know, the Latino kids or the white kids who also are in Special Ed, they have the same thing and it's just simply because they know they're in different classes. "I'm different," **they just happen to associate it with their individuality.**

“What are we doing with
our (sighs) our so called
‘regular ability’ students?”

(Mike Sellers, History Teacher)

“Every class ought to be challenging, every class ought to force students to learn and to grow. But not every class does.

And, yes, it's true.”

(Mr. Webber, associate principal)

Relation between Structure, Practices and Ideas

“Even though he didn’ t quite have the test scores to be in the honors classes right away, he made it clear that he didn’ t want to be in the regular classes...

...I have been unpleasantly made aware of how my children speak about...along racial lines after they’ re at the high school...

...He has not admitted to anything. But if I had to make an educated guess, [his wanting to be in honors] might have something to do with [the idea the regular is for black students]...owing to the comments around the supper table.”

Conclusions

- Need greater focus on school practices and dynamics rather than on Black/Latino family values or individual attitudes
- Institutional and everyday discrimination prevalent and consequential
- Lots of barriers to change:
 - white parents
 - Colorblind ideology
- Only as part of a discussion of all the ways that race continues to matter and through our collective hard work will it come to matter less

