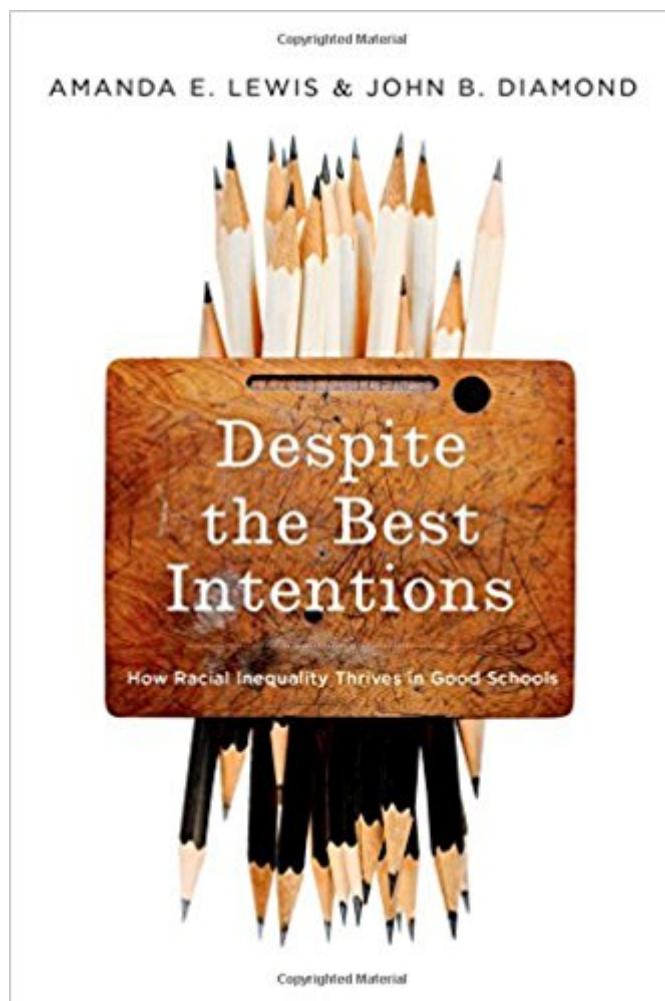


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Despite The Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives In Good Schools (Transgressing Boundaries: Studies In Black Politics And Black Communities)





Synopsis

On the surface, Riverview High School looks like the post-racial ideal. Serving an enviably affluent, diverse, and liberal district, the school is well-funded, its teachers are well-trained, and many of its students are high achieving. Yet Riverview has not escaped the same unrelenting question that plagues schools throughout America: why is it that even when all of the circumstances seem right, black and Latino students continue to lag behind their peers? Through five years' worth of interviews and data-gathering at Riverview, John Diamond and Amanda Lewis have created a rich and disturbing portrait of the achievement gap that persists more than fifty years after the formal dismantling of segregation. As students progress from elementary school to middle school to high school, their level of academic achievement increasingly tracks along racial lines, with white and Asian students maintaining higher GPAs and standardized testing scores, taking more advanced classes, and attaining better college admission results than their black and Latino counterparts. Most research to date has focused on the role of poverty, family stability, and other external influences in explaining poor performance at school, especially in urban contexts. Diamond and Lewis instead situate their research in a suburban school, and look at what factors within the school itself could be causing the disparity. Most crucially, they challenge many common explanations of the 'racial achievement gap,' exploring what race actually means in this situation, and why it matters. An in-depth study with far-reaching consequences, *Despite the Best Intentions* revolutionizes our understanding of both the knotty problem of academic disparities and the larger question of the color line in American society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"In their penetrating excavation of racial inequality in schools, Diamond and Lewis complicate scholarly debates, challenge facile rhetoric, expose the historical narratives that shape contemporary educational discourses, and illuminate a way forward. Powerful, probing and path breaking, *Despite the Best Intentions* is a timely and important book." -Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, Emily Hargroves Fisher Professor of Education, Harvard University and author of *The Good High School*, *I've Known Rivers*, and *The Essential Conversation*"This work goes right to the heart of America's chief educational challenge: how our ordinary, well-intended day-in and day-out school practices can create dramatically different school experiences for students from different identity groups. Read this work and learn what can be done about it." -Claude Steele, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, University of California, Berkeley and author of *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*"In *Despite the Best Intentions*, based on five years of research in an affluent and diverse school district, Lewis and Diamond painstakingly show how white parents hoard resources and teachers almost literally police children of color. This book ought to shake up the way we debate school outcomes as it forces us to appreciate that the 'normal,' seemingly color-blind operation of schools is the problem. Bravo to Lewis and Diamond for a job well done!"-Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Chair and Professor of the Duke Sociology Department"A readable and important addition to the literature on schooling and inequity. Highly recommended. All readers." -CHOICE"Lewis and Diamond have performed a valuable service in revealing essential dynamics of white advantage or privilege in a well-regarded school. Additional case studies of other institutions can build upon their insights. This book should also be widely read by educators, especially those confronted with the seeming paradox of racially dual schools within the same institution." --John L. Rury, University of Kansas, *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*"In their penetrating excavation of racial inequality in schools, Diamond and Lewis complicate scholarly debates, challenge facile rhetoric, expose the historical narratives that shape contemporary educational discourses, and illuminate a way forward. Powerful, probing and path breaking, *Despite the Best Intentions* is a timely and important book." -Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, Emily Hargroves Fisher Professor of Education, Harvard University and author of *The Good High School*, *I've Known Rivers*, and *The Essential Conversation*"This work goes right to the heart of America's chief educational challenge: how our ordinary, well-intended day-in and day-out school practices can

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Amanda Lewis studies racial dynamics in the contemporary US. Her research focuses on how race shapes educational opportunities and on how our ideas about race get negotiated in everyday life. She is the author of the award-winning *Race in the Schoolyard: Negotiating the color-line* in classrooms and communities along with several other volumes. She is on the faculty in the Departments of Sociology and African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. John Diamond is a sociologist of education who focuses on how race, ethnicity, and social class intersect with school leadership, practices, and policies to shape educational opportunities and outcomes. He is the Hoefs-Bascom Professor of Education at University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education. Previously, he was an associate professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and past research director for a consortium of U.S. schools that used research to address racial achievement disparities.

After reading, it became clear me and those around me interested in ending the the educational divide in the U.S., that we as a community could implement what we learned from this 5 year study

and change the trajectory of children's lives. We have since raised funds and started a test program called "The Academy" in Fort Myers Fl. where we track and document the effects of providing the type of attention, engagement and support described in the book in coordination with a proven online curriculum. In addition to the award winning online curriculum, "The Academy" focuses on addressing students perception of self and teaching how to dismiss the low expectations applied to them, the dismissive attitudes of previous well-intentioned educators and the pervasive negative influences directed to low-income, people of color in America. In our first 12 week session we started with 12 children below grade level in reading and or math. We implemented many of the corrective concepts described in the book and were amazed at how quickly the children began to respond. Within 4 weeks we went from do I have to do this to can you help me. By week 6 we had open communication and questions coming from our 6th-8th grade students. By the end of week 12 100% of the participating students completing the post assessment were above grade level using the Texas assessment, which is at a higher level than the Florida Assessment. We are now actively working to raise funds to expand the program so we can track document and share the results with the DOE and local school board. We are absolutely certain that the educational divide can be eradicated this decade.

These authors need to get real and present a more balanced picture. It is very, very, very repetitive and a lot of effort for few ideas. The chapter on behavior and detentions does deem positive comment.

This book is an easy read. The researchers did their homework. Some of the negative reviews say the work is biased. Well, the researchers went into the work with data-- African American students are identified as behind their white contemporaries when it comes to achievement in public schools. This research takes a look at middle class students (black and white) within a middle class neighborhood and determine what variables account for the achievement gap, even in "good" schools.

Such an important read for all educators and parents to understand how we enact systemic racism in our micro decisions and without awareness.

A thorough capturing of the life of a high school, the good, the bad and the ugly. Lewis and Diamond made the school come alive for me, I now understand one of the entrenched, perplexing issues of

the day, the apartheid arrangement of today's schools. They do an excellent job of untangling what people say from what they do. There is a duplicity that is difficult to describe and categorize, but nonetheless it is real and has real consequences. The white students wind up with the good education and GPA, the black and brown kids get the basics. Once this pattern is established in high school, the obvious conclusion is its continuation into college and career. Given the systematic nature of the problem, I did find it hard to determine whose intentions were not being made manifest. All who want to truly understand the education system today should read this book.

Everyone, especially parents and teachers, should read this book if they are serious about educating all of our young people, not only academically, but also culturally. In my opinion, this book would benefit the entire general public.

I am a former teacher and I found the book to be probing, informative, and clearly written. This is a must-read and I am very happy that I purchased it.

thought provoking. Not an easy read but worthwhile.

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