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**Review of *Whither Opportunity: Rising Inequality, Schools and Children's Life Chances*. Greg J. Duncan & Richard Murnane, (Eds.). Reviewed by Catherine Kramarczuk Voulgarides.**

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not those for human rights or corporate personhood rights. For example, corporations that manage apartment complexes can impose outrageous regulations on residents, and towns cannot intervene, for instance requiring that residents must walk directly from their cars or bus stop to their apartments without stopping to talk with other residents. If it is taken for granted by Americans that they only have civil and political rights and that corporations' rights are on a par with persons' rights (sometimes trumping them), we have a lot of hard work ahead of us. Using this as a text, I would supplement it with OWS materials (twitter feeds, FaceBook pages, and web pages). I would (and do) give course credit to students who engage the occupiers in a conversation about the relevance of human rights to the Occupy movement. This is entirely consistent with the activist orientation of the editors and authors of this fine book.

*Judith Blau, Sociology Department, University of North Carolina  
& Director, Human Rights Center of Chapel Hill & Carrboro*

Greg J. Duncan & Richard Murnane, (Eds.). *Whither Opportunity: Rising Inequality, Schools and Children's Life Chances* (2011). New York & Chicago: Russell Sage & Spencer Foundations. \$49.95 (paperback).

In the wake of recent national debates about widening disparities in wealth and income in American society, *Whither Opportunity: Rising Inequality, Schools and Children's Life Chances* is a particularly timely and poignant publication. In this large edited volume of 25 studies, the authors attempt to disentangle the relationship between growing income inequality in America and its impact upon student achievement, educational attainment and labor market outcomes for children from low and high income families. Collectively, the studies provide a powerful and compelling reminder that disparities in educational achievement and life outcomes between poor and affluent children are not merely related to what happens while they are in school, but are also profoundly affected by what is occurring outside of school in their homes and communities. The authors also point out that, despite numerous policy

initiatives aimed at “closing the gap,” the divide is growing.

This book will be of both practical and methodological interest to scholars with an interest in social stratification, education policy and the sociology of education. The editors have assembled a variety of studies that address issues pertaining to inequality and its impact on student achievement, school performance and child development. Several of the studies also offer policy proposals to offset the effects of poverty on educational attainment and life outcomes.

*Whither Opportunity* is divided into 5 substantive sections: The Developing Child and Adolescent, The Family, Neighborhoods, Labor Markets, and Schools, with each section providing a comprehensive analysis of how inequality operates in relation to that topic. Several of the chapters in the book build upon the argument that academic outcomes are strongly influenced by family income, parent education and home environment. For example, Sean Reardon presents a compelling empirical study showing that the “income achievement gap” is nearly twice as large as the Black-White achievement gap, and that it has been growing despite the stability of the relationship between parents’ and children’s educational achievement. The Family section highlights the persistently strong link between the social location of a child’s family and the limited potential for social mobility in American society, despite increased educational opportunity. The Neighborhoods section is the strongest for highlighting the tensions, debates and conflicting findings within the field, related to the effects of class and neighborhood quality on life chances and academic attainment. The Labor Market section explores the effects of employment opportunities on student outcomes, with several studies building on the vast body of research that has established the strong relationship between the two. Finally, many of the chapters in the Schools section address the ongoing debate over the effects of class on life chances and academic outcomes. Several authors in this section consider how social factors such as race, residential segregation, social networks, and immigrant status influence educational attainment.

The book’s strengths rely upon each chapter’s detailed methodological approach, and with this detail, its ability to provide insights for future research on the relationship

between education and rising social inequality in American society. Several national and local databases were incorporated in a number of the chapters, and some studies rely upon econometric methodology, in line with the policy-oriented direction of the book.

The policy-oriented focus, however, limits the book's ability to explain the process of schooling as dynamic and multifaceted. Throughout, schools were presented as one dimensional black boxes, where inputs into schools were associated with predictable outputs. With this view, it comes as no surprise, as nearly each study in the edited volume suggests, that poorer students fare worse than richer ones. Although several of the last chapters in the book discuss school reform models that either employ internal behavior changing models such as the "No Excuses" approach of the Harlem Children's Zone or external comprehensive community-based models, such as the Broader Bolder Approach to educational reform, the analyses still fail to ask how schools and individuals within schools have agency and can interact and react to rising inequality.

In the end, *Whither Opportunity* provides a comprehensive review of inequality's effects on achievement and education in America. However, when one finishes reading *Whither Opportunity*, a lingering question remains: is describing the mechanisms of unequal opportunity enough? The answer to this question is no, and requires initiation of another discussion that will focus researchers to ask not only what is happening when inequality increases in an age of expanding educational opportunity, but also, how can we ensure that in an age of increasing inequality and increasing educational opportunity, equitable outcomes are achieved?

*Catherine Kramarczuk Voulgarides, Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, New York University*

Anita Hill. *Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race, and Finding Home* (2011). Boston, MA: Beacon Press. \$25.95 hardcover.

This latest work by Anita Hill simultaneously contributes to gender studies and the social inequality literature by linking personal stories of homelife and research to the