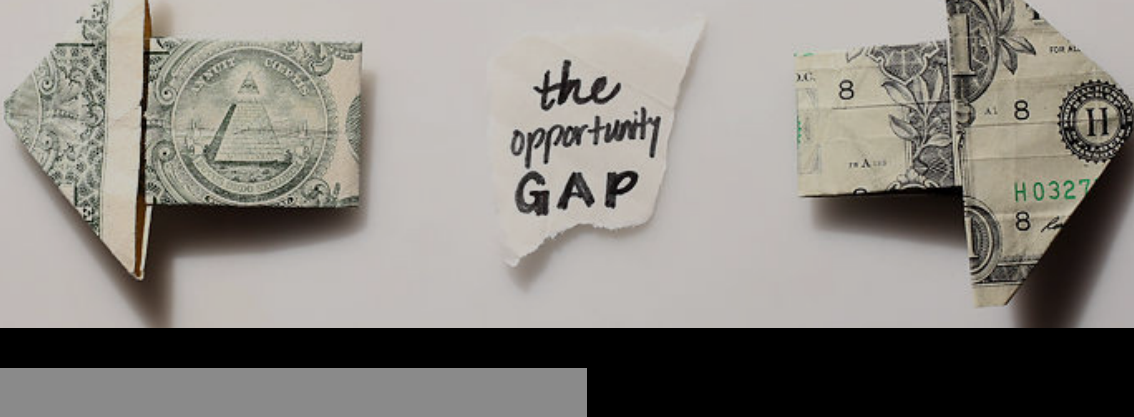




THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

DEIB LEARNING SERIES



PURPOSE:

This DEIB Learning Series topic will dive into the Opportunity Gap and how it exists within the United States, in particular. The Opportunity Gap is one of those issues we are all aware of, like white supremacy and the patriarchy, but because of how wide-ranging and entrenched this issue is - it can be difficult to discuss (where do you even start?!) let alone combat.

This resource will attempt to provide an approachable outline so we can all feel equipped to do our part to close the opportunity gap and, as always, welcome you to join the conversation.

LET'S START WITH SOME DEFINITIONS:

If this is the first time you're hearing about the Opportunity Gap, we'd wager that you actually have heard of it before, but maybe didn't know how it was referred to. The Opportunity Gap essentially refers to the way uncontrollable factors can contribute to lower rates of success in educational achievement, career prospects, and other life aspirations for individuals.

The Opportunity Gap is a critical element to consider especially when thinking about Intersectionality, AKA the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

The Opportunity Gap refers to the fact that we are all born into different circumstances, some more advantageous than others, through no fault of our own. As a result, some communities are set up to thrive, while others struggle to even believe they will ever get a chance to succeed or have the resources to do so. And here lies the inherent problem - the Opportunity Gap has nothing to do with one's potential, but everything to do with the opportunities provided to them.

Sounds familiar, right? After all, we work in the opportunity business and witness firsthand on a daily basis how this permeates the structures in our society and we're sure you see it, too.

THE OPPORTUNITY GAP BY THE NUMBERS:

As we go about our days, it can be challenging to quantify the way the Opportunity Gap affects individuals - again because the effect is so vast. But, there is some data to help give us a better idea about how this shakes out in the country.

To measure this, the US Chamber of Commerce breaks down the effects of the Opportunity Gap into six distinct categories:

EDUCATION

EMPLOYMENT

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

HEALTH

WEALTH

These six areas perpetuate broader issues in our society and negatively impact individual and economic growth.

HERE'S WHY:

EDUCATION

Racial disparities in learning begin before a student steps foot into a classroom. In fact, the Opportunity Gap begins forming at birth and is highly dependent on a child's parent's socio-economic background.

Average math scores for Black students entering kindergarten are 21% lower than those of white students

Black students are twice as likely to attend high-poverty schools as white students

45% of Black students receive no formal education beyond high school

22% of students in poverty don't graduate high school

15.6% less is spent on students in high-poverty districts

3 in 4 college students fear they won't graduate

EMPLOYMENT

Ah, employment. The area of the Opportunity Gap that we know most intimately. As we know, everything candidate we work with is carved from a different circumstance and sometimes those circumstances are what makes or breaks the impressions that are set during the job-seeking process. However, it continues to permeate past the application and interview process - the employment opportunity disparity, like everything we discuss with the Opportunity Gap, has a snowball effect that progressively impacts each individual's life in either positive or negative ways.

Non-white unemployment rates have been consistently twice as high as white unemployment rates for the past four decades

Black American representation in "high earning management and professional" roles, less than their 12% workforce representation

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Since the Opportunity Gap has a long reach in our lives, it also makes sense that it would impact entrepreneurship. After all, if you're struggling to establish your career as it is, how would you even be in the headspace to entertain entrepreneurship? Why do you think that is? It's here that we ask you to consider an earlier point made "some communities are set up to thrive, while others struggle to even believe they will ever get a chance to succeed or have the resources to do so" as we explore how lacking opportunity impacts entrepreneurship.

Black entrepreneurs are nearly three times more likely than white entrepreneurs to have business growth and profitability negatively impacted by a lack of financial capital

9 million jobs would be created if the number of minority-owned businesses increased to be proportional to minority labor force participation

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The Criminal Justice effects we see in the Opportunity Gap spills in and overflows from the same cup. If you have been provided less opportunity in your education and employment, and your chances of success in legal entrepreneurship are low, it's more likely that you also have a criminal record. Furthermore, once you have a criminal record, it then can make it difficult to acquire gainful employment - a cycle that self-perpetuates.

Take a look at the below stats to see how it ends up impacting the lives of marginalized and oppressed communities:

Black Americans represent 40% of the incarcerated population in the U.S. but only 13% of the total U.S. population

A criminal record reduces employer callback rates by 65% for Black American men, compared to a 50% reduction for white men

HEALTH

Our health is widely impacted by what's considered the Social Determinants of Health - the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, play, learn, work, and age. And what is our health widely connected to? Employment. Thankfully, in recent years, we have made progress to provide some options to individuals who are not working so that they can gain health insurance, but oftentimes individuals still go without because if you have a choice to feed your family vs. scheduling your annual physical - you are going to feed your family. Unfortunately, this access to primary care is why we see such large gaps in the health of white communities, and the health of BIPOC communities (and we're not even going into cultural differences in trust of Western Medicine).

Non-white patients are 2 to 3 times as likely to die from preventable heart disease and stroke than white patients

The COVID-19 death rate for Black Americans is 3.6 times the rate for white Americans when adjusted for age

WEALTH

It's likely that none of us are surprised to see wealth on this list. In the United States, there are significant disparities between ethnic groups. Wealth disparities are reflected in everything from retirement planning to homeownership to net worth. These circumstances greatly contribute to one's financial well-being in every stage of life. Let's examine this further.

The net worth of a typical white family is almost 10 times the net worth of the average Black family

Black families contribute to retirement accounts at about half the rate of white families (60%)

SO, WHAT CAN BE DONE TO CLOSE THE GAP?

These disparities are systemic, so it will take an ongoing, all-hands-on-deck approach to remedy them.

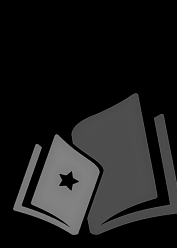
On a nationwide level, we can close the opportunity gap by guaranteeing every child's right to public education based on high-quality early childhood education, effective teachers, college preparatory curriculum, and equitable instructional resources and policies.

To push for this, we recommend following and supporting legislation aimed at closing the Opportunity Gap. Write to your representatives and talk to your friends and family about the importance of this effort. As you can see, oftentimes this centers around early childhood education, so we can nip the issue in the bud.

WHAT DOES PREMIER DO?

Here at Premier, this is precisely where we dedicate our efforts. Through Premier Promise, we partner closely with Real Options for City Kids (R.O.C.K.), Summer Search, and Reading Partners - organizations doing the work on the ground to make sure each child that walks through their doors is provided with opportunity.

We have fostered close relationships with these selected organizations because we have seen firsthand the difference they can make in children's lives and how they set them up for success long term. This is only a start, but we truly feel that by lifting up these organizations so they can continue their life-changing work, we are making an intentional effort to close the Opportunity Gap and also are helping develop the skills of further generations.



LET'S KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING:

We hope that after learning more about this topic, you will be more aware and equipped to combat the Opportunity Gap in your daily lives. If you're curious about reading more about this topic, we've included a couple TedTalks to help you get started - and would love to hear what ideas you come up with.



Anindya Kundu

[The Opportunity Gap in US Public Education and How To Close It](#)



Brooke Chow

[Why the Opportunity Gap is the Greatest Problem in Education](#)

Otherwise, take a look at some of our Premier Promise efforts [here](#), and let us know if there are any other organizations worthwhile that we should consider partnering with.

Data referenced has been pulled from "America's Opportunity Gaps: By The Numbers" by the US Chamber of Commerce.