

Our Kids: The Opportunity Gap that threatens the American Dream

Robert D. Putnam

Harvard University

March 2015

An opportunity gap has grown over the last 30 years between rich kids and poor kids in America. This gap threatens our national prosperity, our democracy, and most fundamentally, the promise of the American Dream that all our children, regardless of their family background, have a decent chance of success in life.

The growing gap shows up in many diverse indicators of children's well-being:

- The stability of their families
- The time and money their parents invest them
- The quality of the schools they attend
- The amount of education they complete
- The mentoring and other support they get from their communities

The growing gap has been caused by

- America's increasingly unequal distribution of income
- America's increasingly class-segregated society
- The collapse of the working class family
- Most important, America's shriveled sense of "us" and who counts as "our kids"

There are proven, practical strategies for narrowing the gap, but they require more resources and above all, collaboration across lines of party and ideology.

This is *not* a zero-sum game: investing in all our kids will ensure a more prosperous future for all our kids.