

Before the Rescue Squad Arrived: Community Sponsorship of Exceptional African-American Children in Poor Communities

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Introduction

This paper presents the results of a small qualitative study of the social origins of black physicians from poor urban and southern communities. The study examines contextual factors in the communities of these high achievers that help to explain their great academic and professional success as young adults. We argue that it was the community that identified and nurtured these gifted children, thus making it possible for them to attend college and professional school. Within many communities there were indigenous traditions and resources that were mobilized for star students.

Researchers in the area of gifted and exceptional children have historically ignored African-Americans. This omission is just now being addressed with attention being paid to cognitive measurement issues and to concerns regarding the designing of adequate school programs to enhance the development of long-ignored exceptional children of color.

Still, there is a need to push emerging social scientific concerns about exceptional children of color populations, such as African Americans, beyond the critical realm of cognitive ability measurement and school programs. There is the at least equally critical

need to focus on contextual issues central to understanding the ways in which exceptional children in oppressed status categories come to manifest extraordinary intellectual abilities. Concretely, we must begin to think about the ways in which African-American and other exceptional children of color develop their unusual intellectual talents in matrixes of relatively stable patterns of human interaction, i.e. webs of social organizations, such as institutions, networks, peer groups and communities.

Ever since the origins of the exceptional children field in the early 1920s, researchers have focused on intellectually gifted children from middle/affluent class background (Terman, 1925). They have been interested principally in constructing and applying tests and programs geared towards identifying and educating the gifted based on the norms and values of middle/affluent Euro-Americans. Needless to say, this convention in exceptional children research has institutionalized a taken-for-granted cognitive map in research processes which has resulted in culture- and class-biased traditions in the relatively few studies done on exceptional children of color. This middle/affluent class bias has resulted in the "minute presence of African-American or other children of color in the collected data" being explained away in fictive biological (their "white blood") or middle-income socioeconomic terms (their "professional" family background), depending on the historical climate of opinion (Terman, 1925; Bond, 1972).

On the other hand, the success of exceptional children of color, especially African Americans, tends to be explained in terms of what could be called the burning house rescue squad metaphor. Simply, exceptional African Americans from impoverished families and communities are saved from perishing by powerful Euro-centric institutions and individual sponsors external to their communities who scoop them up, polish them up and send them on their way up the mobility ladder. Especially predominantly white private schools, universities, political parties, private philanthropic foundations, and media have been quite effective in taking the rescue squad credit for discovering and sponsoring the exceptional ghetto kid "just in time (Zuckerman, 1977)." Their testimonials of such heroic deeds, as well as testimonials of their grateful beneficiaries make great copy for mass consumption in a society in which publics assume that the

secret to African-American success is working hard and finding the bootstraps to pull oneself up (the “poverty to success” stories of Clarence Thomas and Colin Powell are the most recent high profile examples of such racialized mobility interpretations).

Both of these approaches miss a vital empirical point. Namely, regardless of the cultural biases of the mainstream press, political processes, and academic interpretations, not all non-affluent African Americans grow up in mud puddles of totally dysfunctional and otherwise negative environments characterized by social disorganization and cultural pathology. Indeed, history demonstrates that not a few African-American parents and other child care providers in poverty have and still do manage to do the necessary things to enable their children to realize their intellectual abilities and to move on outside the community to further develop their extraordinary gifts. At most, the Euro-centric social organizations which eventually propel their African-American beneficiaries into elite, high status occupations, institutions, and communities, are the means through which goals are achieved — goals set by indigenous sponsors years before the mobility patterns began.

It is hard for many mainstream social scientists to understand the importance of this observation since the conventional wisdom in the social sciences about poor African Americans and their social organizations and individual values and priorities is so negative. Nothing, so it is presumed by many, good comes out of the ghetto or the cotton field unless the person is identified and refined by some external, powerful agency. This widespread belief, which is especially apparent in the tone and focus of African-American underclass research in the social sciences (Jencks and Peterson, 1991), has encouraged oversights regarding the social organizational origins and development of intellectually gifted African-American poor children who make it through internalizing and applying coping strategies from indigenous sponsors.

Indigenous sponsorship, like mentorship in general, is a configuration in the form of a ladder a beneficiary uses to gradually climb out of the community and on to other social organizational settings for further life-broadening experiences. This definition of sponsorship differs from the usual individualistic notions portraying a master and a student in a one-to-one relationship. Sponsorship, if it is to work for the upwardly mobile, is more complex than that. It involves

the linking together in a vertical fashion of numerous persons who play crucial roles in identifying, grooming, protecting, and promoting the beneficiary; pulling him or her up through a complex society which is increasingly alien socially and culturally.

The Study

The author began to conceptualize these ideas in 1984 while exploring the life histories of a small sample (N=21, 11 females, 10 males) of African-American baby-boomer medical doctors. These doctors, who were overwhelmingly from small rural southern communities and graduates of black colleges, were defined as "socially deficient" by a prominent foundation program (Stanfield, 1996), which identified them during their senior year in college, placed them in a one-year post-baccalaureate program, and sponsored their admissions into white medical schools.

The foundation program, which recruited some seventy African-American fellows between 1966 and 1971, was rooted in culture of poverty assumptions that were common in 1960s efforts to expand equal access opportunities in higher education for African Americans. Perhaps the most common assumption foundation officers had was that by virtue of residing in the rural south and attending a black college, an African American was socially deprived to such an extent that he or she needed social grooming and additional academic prepping as well as financial assistance before being ready for entry into a white medical school. That was the purpose of the post-baccalaureate year spent in one of several elite private liberal arts colleges. It was to allow the African-American fellows to be coached in pre-med courses and to be exposed to upper middle class white academic culture. In this respect, the foundation program was a rescue squad approach to identifying and sponsoring the career mobility of exceptional African-American young adults viewed as being "socially deficient" due to their communities of origin and black alma maters.

The author was asked originally to write a public relations report on the impressive successes of the foundation program. Instead, he became interested in and negotiated to do pre-adulthood life histories of the program fellows as sources of their intellectual achievements and as resources that enabled them to eventually become

skilled in mastering and passing through alien modes of social organization and culture in their mobility pursuits.

Through administering an in-depth history instrument, the author found there was nothing magical or random about the arrival of sample members in undergraduate colleges, in post-baccalaureate colleges, in medical schools, or in professional practice. Most of them were from poor families and communities in terms of parental and other child provider occupation, income level, and educational levels. Most of the child providers had modest means of livelihood. Even those who were teachers were underpaid professionals with little or no mobility opportunities in the rural-based segregated communities in which most of them lived and worked.

Since the majority of those future doctors interviewed were born in the late 1940s, most attended segregated public schools and were confined to segregated, impoverished African-American communities. Even the few who had teachers for parents and/or other relatives lived out economically marginal lives excluded from more privileged local white communities.

All but a very few of the interviewees, especially those who are now on their way to becoming superstars in their professions, developed as children and adolescents the intellectual qualities that are essential for successful mobility in elite professions, institutions, and communities. Most (1) were avid pleasure readers as children, particularly in science fiction areas; (2) had highly disciplined study skills as children and adolescents; (3) were "good" at math and science in elementary and secondary school (not a few planned to be either a scientist or a medical doctor when they completed their education); and (4) by early adolescence had developed an extraordinary sense of independent thinking and goal setting. Also, most as children and early adolescents had a strong sense that there was not only another world beyond the community, but that they would get there one day.

If we forget community and family contexts, it is easy to understate the significance of the mentioned social skills and perceptions members of the sample developed during childhood and adolescence. The interviewed medical doctors grew up in tightly knit families and communities in which becoming a farm worker or a cab driver or a housewife was the norm, as was the assumption that high school was as far as most would go. The extended families, churches, and com-

munity-based schools in which most of them participated assured great authoritative adult control over the affairs of children and adolescents; especially since such social organizations more often than not enjoyed significant functional integration through overlapping leadership roles (that is, one's Aunt Susie was also one's Sunday School teacher and homeroom primary school teacher). Thus, norm deviation of any sort was difficult to the extreme in the tightly knit community in which most of the fellows were reared.

The key to understanding the ability for the future doctors to be socially different as children and adolescents, and to rise eventually above the typical social horizons of their peers and communities of origin, is the social organizational basis of indigenous sponsorship. Every interviewee was integrated into a configuration of sponsors forming various kinds of vertical chain links from early childhood through late adolescence. After leaving home, most actively attracted other sponsors who took over the process of guiding and promoting their mobility. The positive function of configurations of indigenous sponsors was most clearly apparent in the cases in which the future doctors were the children of illiterate parents or parents who had no noticeable interest in their children's intellectual abilities. In such cases, sponsors were often older siblings and other relatives who had at least some college experience or who had respect for education and intellect. In many cases, the sponsors were school teachers, especially in secondary school science and math fields.

Whoever the sponsors were, they (1) discovered the exceptional intellect of their charge; (2) created the social space and provided the resources for the charge to develop intellectual abilities relatively free from peer and community counter pressures; (3) networked with other sponsors in the community who recognized, encouraged, and protected the unique intellectual abilities of the charge; and (4) provided opportunities for the charge to become socially larger than the community.

Consider the case of Stanecia Leer (all names and places are fictitious) who was reared in rural Mississippi. Her parents separated while she was quite young. Her mother moved to Jackson when Stanecia was three, and her grandparents and other members of her community reared her. Although on the surface in a body of official demographic statistics Stanecia would be considered the victim of a

broken home, her comments explain how being passed around the community contributed to her academic success as a mathematician, student, and now as a physician.

I came up in rural Mississippi, and in rural Mississippi we did a lot of harvesting for income. So, on a farm with my grandfather we used to pick cotton in our field, in other people's fields, and picking cotton you had to — in the day they would weigh the cotton and then somebody would tabulate the amount of money that the person made; even as a small child during those years, I was motivated to things especially mathematics wise; I was always interested in figures. For example, even [when I was] a very small child they would allow me to actually figure up the amount of work they did that day and allow me to actually figure up how much money they made at the end of the day without any questions and as I went on through this ... as I went along a lot of people continued to motivate me. I started out with a lady named Mrs. Bessy Russell and I really don't remember, I don't remember her, but what I remember is not exactly what my grandmother tells me. But, she took me as a child and taught me. I remember when I started elementary school I had come up with my cousins who were older than me, but I knew how to read before I started school and knew all my time tables.

Stanfield: Who taught you that?

Leer: I learned it from them, but this lady, Mrs. Russell, would take me to her house (she was a school teacher); apparently I wanted to read and I wanted to know and she answered many of my questions and then from there ... she taught me a lot, my cousins would be doing their homework at night and I recall just getting involved in their homework and actually learning how to do it and sometimes even better than they did, especially with things having to do with the mathematics area. I can remember those very early years before I even started elementary school. And then, when I went to elementary school, I got adopted by a family: Mrs. Russell who became my

sixth grade teacher, and her daughter Clara, who was my eleventh grade homeroom teacher. But I got adopted by these people, and they just motivated you to do whatever you wanted. If you said something they would encourage you. I remember being in the sixth grade and her saying to me that she knew what I was going to do when I finished high school, and she said I was doing to college; and I don't remember saying that to her, but she said I did it. So, I'm off to college in sixth grade. So, I just got a lot of motivation from people and really being adopted by this family who made sure that I had sometimes just proper clothing and even when I got to take the SAT test, I remember not having some fairly minute bit of money to take that SAT test, but her daughter, Clara, made sure I took the test.

Communities, and more broadly, societies, have hierarchies in their social organizations. No matter how simple or complex, upward mobility in a particular community and in larger society is dependent upon the mobility aspirant's ability to develop a network of positive sponsors. A sponsor is usually an older and wiser person who acts as the aspirant's guide up the societal hierarchy.

What is so interesting about sponsorship, particularly among the poor and otherwise oppressed, is that in many, if not most, cases, the sponsor has never attained what he/she encourages his/her charge to become. The sponsor, through knowing there is a better world though never experiencing it first hand, gives the aspirant the motivation and the skills needed to eventually accomplish what the sponsor can only dream about.

Sponsoring is most successful when the sponsor acts more as a protector of talent and as a midwife of opportunity, than as a master demanding complete obedience and absolute conformity. This is because the sponsor is in and of the community, and therefore the charge must have the innovative ability to use learned skills and role modeling to transcend the community.

This observation is similar to what Harriet Zuckerman (1977) has remarked about the importance of work style models prominent scientists pass on to their future Nobel Prize winning students. She found that what enabled many Nobel Prize winners she interviewed

to succeed to such great career heights was their ability to adopt their sponsor's work style and apply it to a new set of problems. Sponsors who have "successful" charges encourage them to apply the values, interpersonal skills, and personality they themselves transmit to new situations and sets of problems.

This culture-expanding role of sponsors is crucial in communities in which mobility aspirants succeed by leaving the community and becoming upwardly mobile in a larger society premised upon a different cultural system. What happens is that the cultural attributes mobility aspirants learn from their sponsors — the values, coping mechanisms, and interpersonal skills — become the cultural baggage they bring with them while traveling up the socioeconomic ladder. Both in positive and in negative ways, these indigenous cultural attributes are transformed and applied in new settings: undergraduate school, medical school and medical practices.

To test these assumptions, the interviewed doctors were asked a number of questions about sponsors they had acquired from childhood through the present, or, during their late young adulthood years. Since the author wanted to explore the role of sponsors during pre-professionalization years, the questions were weighted towards sponsorship during the childhood and through pre-undergraduate school adolescent years.

With regard to their educational goals, every interviewed doctor had sponsors during childhood and adolescence, who encouraged and supported their educational attainment. In most, but certainly not all, cases, parents and other child care providers and teachers served as educational sponsors. In a few instances, siblings were educational sponsors. The issue of sponsoring illustrated the importance of extended families in African-American communities since not a few grandparents aunts, uncles, and, to a lesser extent, cousins served as educational sponsors.

Usually no distinction is made between various sponsorship roles. One way of making such a distinction is to categorize some sponsors as having inspirational resources while others have world-opening resources. Sponsors who inspire but have no "world opening" resources are expressive sponsors. Expressive sponsors provide the socioemotional resources and encouragement for their charges to achieve and provide the intellectual atmosphere, for career de-

velopment drive. But they have no tangible resources to help the mobility aspirant transcend the community and no influential contacts outside the community.

The ideal image of an expressive sponsor is a parent or grandparent “who doesn’t know but wants his/her child to make something out of him or herself.” Examples of expressive sponsors would be an older sibling who encourages, if not pressures, a young sibling into have focused achievement motivation; or a grandparent who “stays after” his grandson about being a doctor, though he does not have the resources to assure he becomes one. An example of the second case is seen in how Harvey Miller decided to become a physician during late childhood.

Stanfield: Who was your major academic advisor during your high school years?

Miller: My grandfather said to me when I was maybe about ten or twelve years old — he said “what do you want to do when you grow up?” as grandfathers typically do. And I said I wanted to be a scientist. He kind of chewed on that for a while. At some point later on, he said, “A scientist sounds all right. But I think you ought to be a doctor.” He said, “You were born under the same sign that your uncle was born under and he’s a doctor and he’s doing very well in Detroit and I think you ought to pattern after him.” I didn’t really like that idea very much of course. I never was very comfortable with the idea of death and dying and blood and gore. And so, I avoided the issue. And he would keep saying each time we met, “Have you been thinking about what I told you?” He kind of pressed the issue a little bit. And finally I decided that after all science — medicine has a big scientific component to it and I didn’t know exactly what or how science interfaced. But i knew that doctors have to use a lot of science in practicing medicine and maybe that wouldn’t be too far off from my interest area anyway. So I started saying that I wanted to be a doctor around age twelve or so, thirteen, and his response was “That’s my boy.” And I kept getting positive reinforcement each time he asked me and I would say that I wanted to be a doctor.

And so that thought just became my goal. The more I said it, the more I believed.

Mary Soute offered some interesting insights about her expressive sponsoring parents. (Her father died before he could become an effective instrumental sponsor during her teenage years.)

Soute: Okay. Let's see, the most important influence I had in terms of people who motivated me to achieve and try to be better and strive for higher education was my grandmother on my mother's side. I was reared by her. My mother and father were old when I was born. My mother was like 45 and my father was almost 60 and they were both working and they had two older children, and so my grandmother took me when I was about eighteen months old and reared me here in Phoenix. I would see my parents and my brothers on the weekend, but my grandmother's major interest was the importance of education. She had educated her three children. My mother had attended nursing college in 1920, '23, and my uncle had finished college in 1917, so she was pretty active even back that early in 1917 and the '20s about education. She was strict back to me. My mother was less involved in education. She was an R.N., but she didn't really get excited about education. My father, on the other hand, having come out of a family that stressed education so highly, especially teaching and educating otherwise, spent a lot of time reading and teaching and reading poetry to me and that really stimulated my mind to compete with word math problems for fun. You know, he made education a fun sort of thing and he saw that as his role and as a part of his family's role in educating people. So, my grandmother, she was the biggest influence because she was around me the most. Because with her, it was a very emotional thing, education and the importance of education. Let's see, in elementary school, I never really remember being pushed in school to do well; I was just expected to do well by my grandmother. You become educated to be self-sufficient, not for the sake of learning.

Stanfield: Well, what were some of the thing which

they said or did to make you slowly become aware of the fact that these things really mean that she wants you to get educated?

Soute: Well, I don't recall anything specifically. I just recall being brought up in an environment where women were supposed to be educated, supposed to take care of themselves. They were not supposed to be dependent, but she never really pushed me in any one direction; she never really looked at my grades in elementary school, my cards and things like that. And my mother was even worse about things like that. My mother just never looked at the card, and I would even sign my own card and take it back. So, I was never really pushed to achieve, to be better than anyone else in the class. It's just that I think my father really made education kind of fun and interesting, but for my grandmother it was more practical: "You must be educated to support yourself."

Stanfield: Would your father quiz you, not to harass you, but to stimulate you, challenge you, etc.

Soute: He did; he would work math problems and try to make that fun. He would read poetry. He was the first person who introduced me to Longfellow and different poetry, when I was little, like in elementary school, so I really appreciate that and I tend to do that sort of thing with my son, now, just out of habit.

Stanfield: Was poetry your favorite kind of reading as a child?

Soute: Yes, as a child it was, and we would memorize things together. He and I would memorize things together.

Stanfield: Was there any other kind of reading that you liked to do?

Soute: Not particularly. I would read other things. Most of mine occurred at school; I don't know why. I don't remember becoming competitive in school or wanting to do better than other people until I was in high school. But by that time, my grandmother was dead and my mother really kind of let you grow up and do whatever you wanted to do. And by that time my father was begin-

ning to decline. In high school, they were never really that active in what I did, but then when I graduated from high school, you know, the honors that I received, then they all became a little more involved. But I really never had any real push.

Instrumental sponsors not only inspire, but they have resources that open up the world for the mobility aspirant. That is, they not only know about the outside world, but also have the connections that assist the charge in mobility. They have money, know-how about college education procedures, and/or knowledge of the value of travel in human development. In one case, the interviewed doctor's father, who was an administrator at a historically black college, was her major instrumental sponsor. In most cases, an instrumental sponsor was a teacher who insisted that the mobility aspirant attend a particular college and would even do the application submission leg-work.

Frequently, an instrumental and expressive sponsor were one and the same person. The resourcefulness of instrumental sponsors can be very important. This is because expressive sponsorship draws upon indigenous, intangible resources while instrumental sponsorship is premised upon useful connections with institutions of higher learning and other resources outside the community. Although all respondents had distinctly expressive sponsors, those respondents who have achieved the most also had a hierarchy of highly involved instrumental sponsors.

When there was no sponsoring in the home or when it was only expressive, school teachers and administrators became prominent instrumental sponsors. Two examples should suffice: Stanecia Leer and James Allen.

Leer: I still had the reinforcement from this adopted family. They continued with me up into high school and through high school. Mrs. Smith — who I called my second mother — and her daughter were in the high school once I moved to Green County Training School. In junior high school, the principal of the high school, Mr. Fitse, became very interested in my mathematical abilities and encouraged my grandmother to encourage me to continue my education, and that was one of the interesting things.

Not that I thought I was special or anything, but I knew something was different and that's when I began to realize something *was* different. During harvesting season my cousins would have to stay home and pick cotton or corn, but my grandmother said to me, "¥You should go to school. You can't miss any days of school." I missed very few days out of school because Mr. Fitse, the principal of junior high, had said that I should stay in school, and she took it very literally that I should not miss any time out of school. Early September was harvesting time for cotton, and there were very few kids in school. I mean the teachers' kids were in school and [there were] a few of the others who would allow their kids to go to school, but I had to catch the school bus and many days when the school bus came by to pick me up I was the only person out of one or two people on that school bus headed to school. That's when I finally began to realize something was different, but I still didn't understand. The reinforcement was still there; it was coming from everywhere at that time. I just basically studied.

Allen. I had biological parents but I was adopted and don't know my biological parents. The adopted parents — I don't know how far my mother went in school. I imagine she had some, but I would doubt that she finished high school. My Dad, on the other hand, — and I don't know if this is true — my Dad told me he went to Black College, and naturally if he went there he had to have finished high school. I know he never said he finished Black College, but that did leave an impression on me so much that when I was in the sixth grade I told my sixth grade teacher, Miss Mary Brown — she passed around one afternoon asking us what we wanted to do when we grew up — I wanted to be an engineer and I wanted to go to Black College because my father had told me that and it had stayed in my mind. I mean, — you know how a kid is, teacher praises you or something — that sort of floored the old lady that I wanted to something like that (laughter), and I have only my memory to

credit, and my Dad had been taking the time at some point to tell me that — truth or falsehood — that he had done it.

Stanfield. Okay, well, tell me about your other relatives — uncles, aunts — that come to your mind that...

Allen: Well, my Uncle Bill, who was a father surrogate and a good friend of my Daddy — they worked on the highway together — I guess he probably finished the third grade, but you see, these were people who — the issue was that they all could write and they all could read. When I was three and her [mother] sister then took me to raise, and Uncle Bill was her common law husband. The four were really my primary sources of identification and provided me with parental guidance and instruction. Uncle Bill probably went to third grade, and my Aunt Susan — they were common lay people — I know she went to the third grade, but as I said they all wrote. They could read. She took the paper every day. The paper boy threw the paper into the yard. You know, we didn't own a TV, but in terms of basic skills, I could read and write pretty early. I recall the first day in school I could write my name. But, for the life of me, I've never been able to figure out how I learned. But I know that the first day — in fact the first morning — I agreed to go to the board and — either because the teacher wrote my name on the board and had me go up and copy what she wrote until I could copy my name or — in fact, as I think about it — this is the first time I've sorted out how that must have happened — that must have been the first time I learned to write, because she must have sent me to the board and wrote our name on the board, you know printed it out, and then had us come and try our luck at printing our names. And I liked it so much that when the time came to go for lunch — we broke for lunch and you could go home, you see, either to the cafeteria or you could go home — I still wanted to write my name. That was my first day in school. So the point I'm making is that those people were not scholars or were not educated people.

They were hard-working folk, at least my Dad and my Uncle Bill were. They worked.

Stanfield: Okay. What was it about your high school experiences in terms of courses, in terms of academic counseling by counselors and teachers, which directed you to go to college and eventually to medical school. Did you take a lot of science courses, in other words...

Allen: I guess from that first day in school my teachers became a major source of — they became parent surrogates in a sense for me — the different sort of parent and source of idealization and identification with — and so throughout elementary school and in high school I was a fairly good student. Because I was, you know, poor, poor people, in fact I was on public assistance. My aunt obtained public assistance for me, you see, so school became a major source of pride and a place where one could elevate one's self esteem and feel like you were somebody. And the teachers allowed you to, urged that and encouraged that. Now in high school, then, there were some teachers like Miss Hill, the vice principal who taught algebra and geometry — her rigorous style in requiring that you learn the logic of plane geometry and, you know, that you did word problems by thinking them through; and she just about wrote you have to work them over and over again.

Conclusion

When there was an instrumental sponsor in the home, such as a grandparent, parent, sibling, or aunt, there were more or less important sponsors picked up in other institutional settings. Those with sponsors at home were, for the most part, the children of school teachers and administrators. Two social organizational sources of sponsorship not mentioned by fellows were churches and school counseling offices.

In most cases, when the physicians entered undergraduate schools, they picked up instrumental sponsors who assisted them in making career decisions that led to admission into the foundation program, which selected fellows through consulting with faculty

members and administrators. The informality of the program's selection process for those young adults who not only had exceptional intellectual abilities, but, perhaps more important, those who had learned the benefits of attracting and cultivating mobility mentors well before the "rescue squad" arrived on the scene.

In conclusion, the most important point of this paper is that scholars interested in African-American exceptional children reared in poor communities need to expand their research designs to include indigenous contextual factors that help explain the development of such youngsters. More than that, indigenous contextual factors known to facilitate the development of exceptional African-American children in poor communities that can be modeled and replicated should be identified to increase the number of such extraordinarily talented human beings who fulfill their potential.

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