



Centro de Estudios Públicos  
*30 años*



THE HARRIS SCHOOL  
PUBLIC POLICY | THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

# Discrimination goes to School? Racial and Gender Differences in Performance Assessments by Teachers

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# Motivation

- *Information*

- Education policy guided by **information** on performance of students;
- Soft and hard accountability are devices aiming at the solution of principal-agent issues based on **information** dissemination (attained or targeted performance);
- Mixed-messages?
  - Transcripts are still the main communication channel between teachers and parents...

# Accountability?



# Questions

- *Asymmetric information*
  - Do teachers know more about competence than policy-makers do?
    - Should we care about other aspects besides performance in standardized proficiency tests?
- *Disinformation*
  - Are teachers standards “adequate”?
  - Do teachers help spread stereotypes?
    - Misleading information regarding rates of return to investments in education

# Different observations of 4<sup>th</sup> graders

## Teachers

- Proficiency (repeated obs.)
- Written use of language (repeated obs.)
- Oral use of language
- Behavioral issues/personality traits

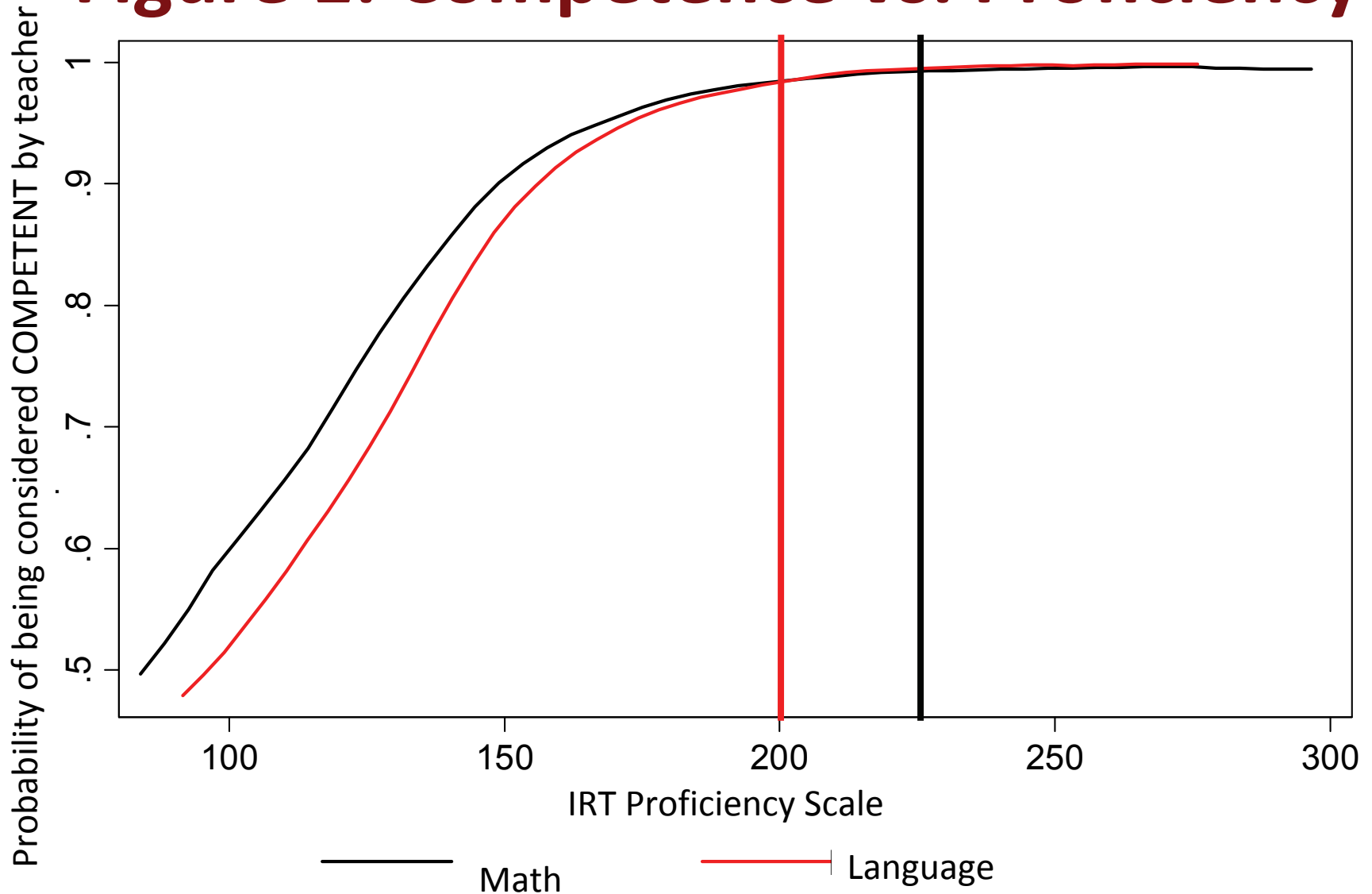
LET'S CALL IT **COMPETENCE**

## Policy maker

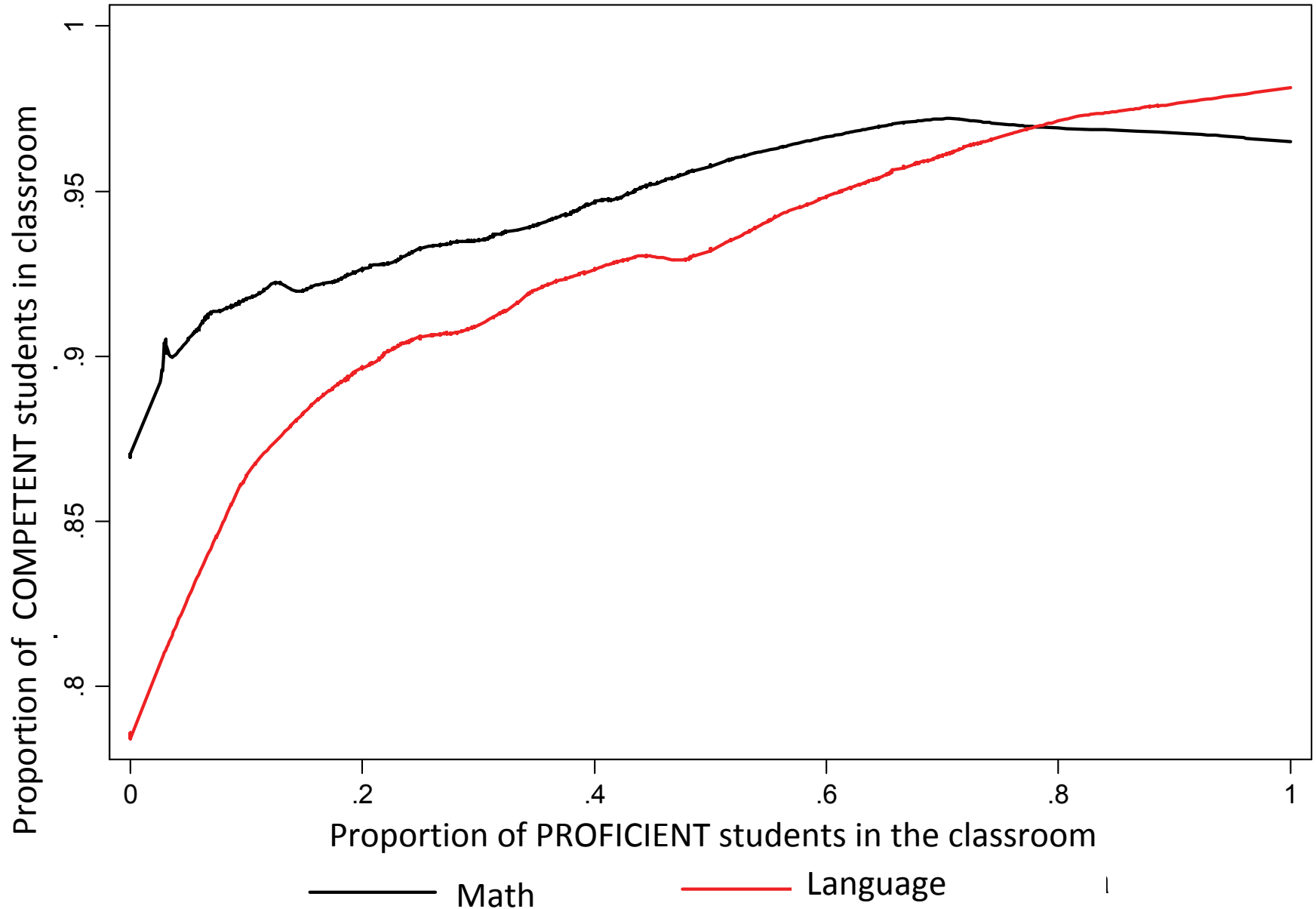
- Proficiency (one-shot)
- Written use of language (one-shot essay)

LET'S CALL IT **PROFICIENCY**

# Figure 1: Competence vs. Proficiency



# Figure 2: Competence vs. Proficiency



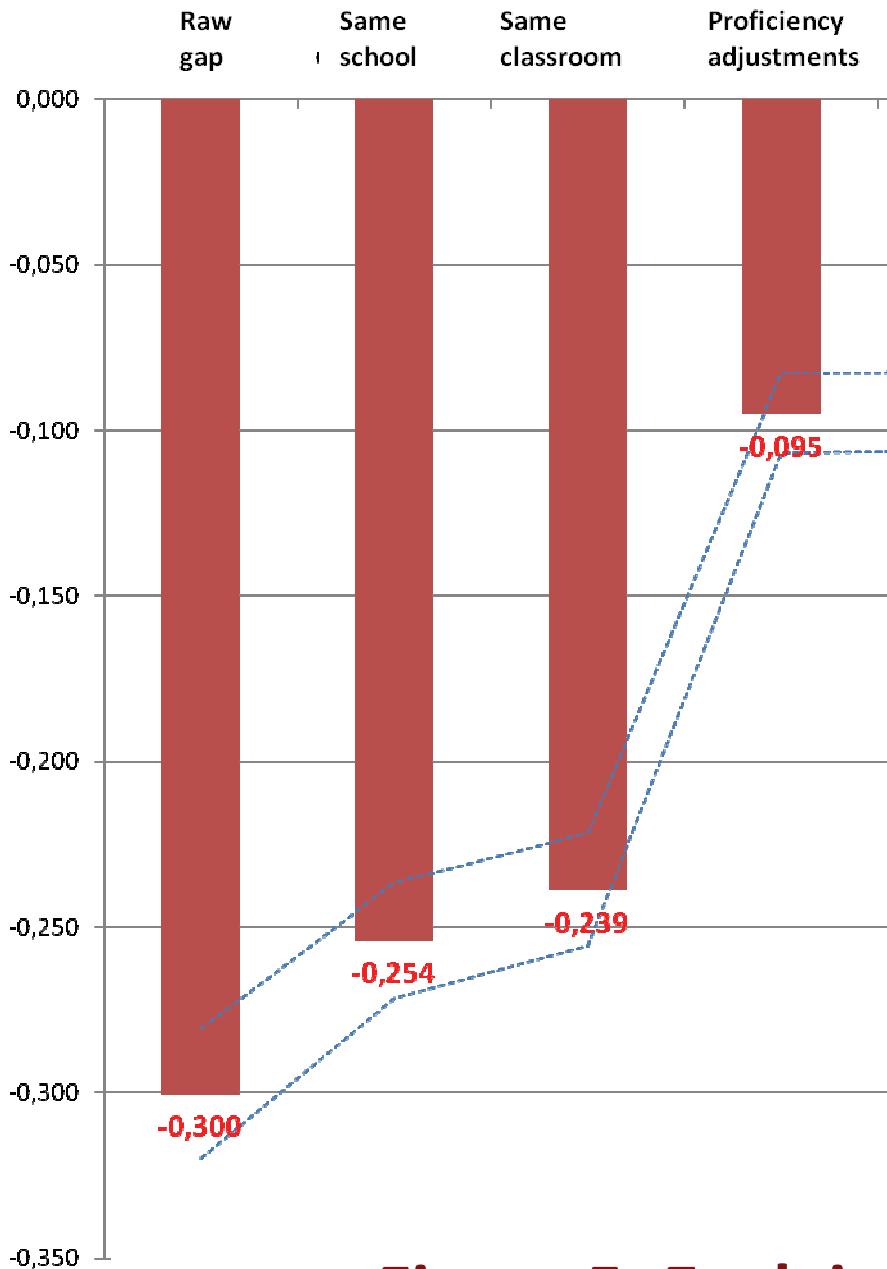
# On stereotypes: Raw Racial Gaps

- On an 0 – 10 scale, standardized proficiency test indicates:
  - Blacks score 0,439 less on Math
  - Blacks score 0,443 less on Language.
- Teachers' evaluations indicate:
  - Blacks reach grades 0,300 lower on Math
  - Blacks reach grades 0,303 lower on Language.



# Are grades explained by proficiency?

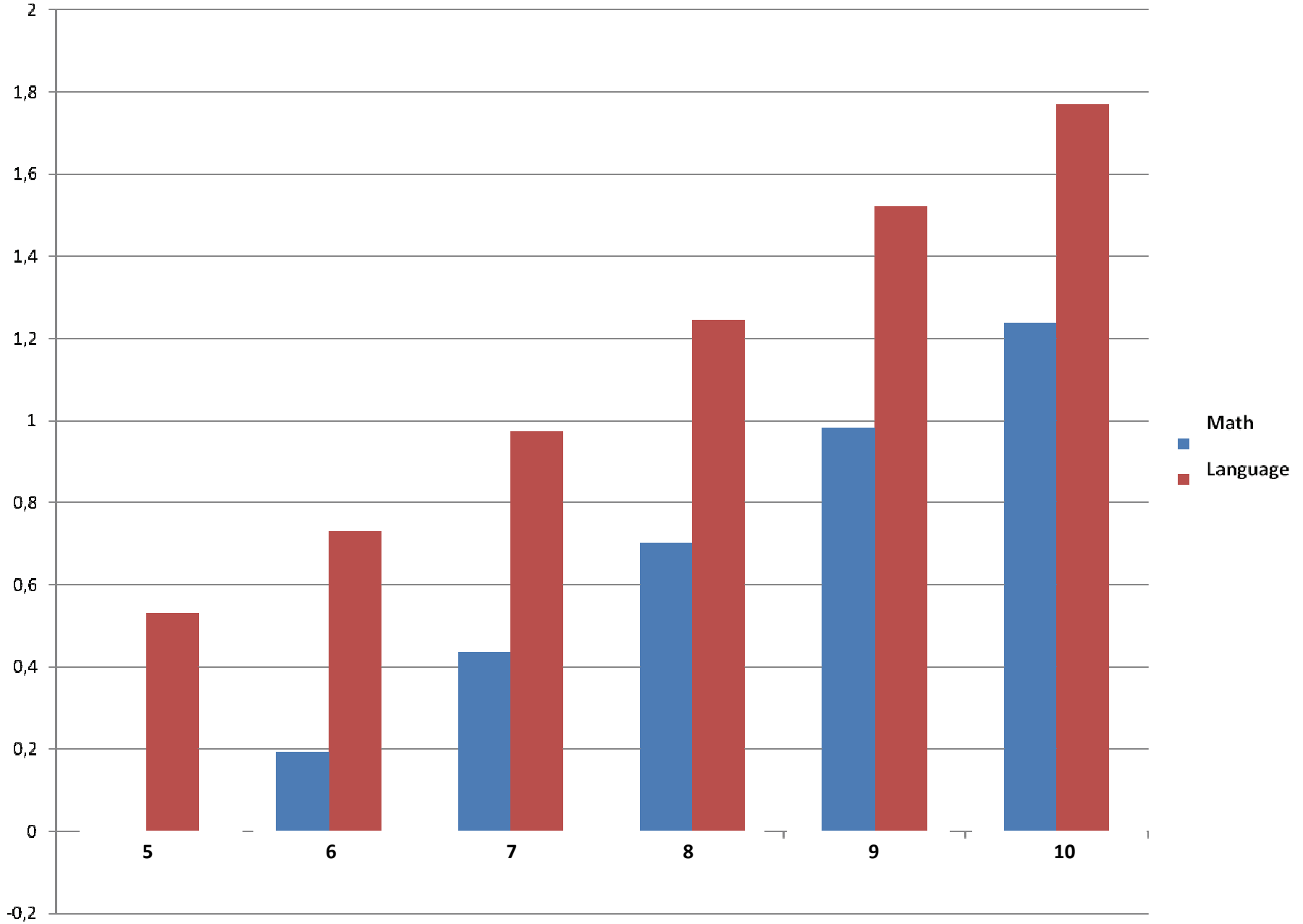
- Comparison of machine read standardized tests and teacher assessments
- Statistical decomposition of the raw racial gap presented above



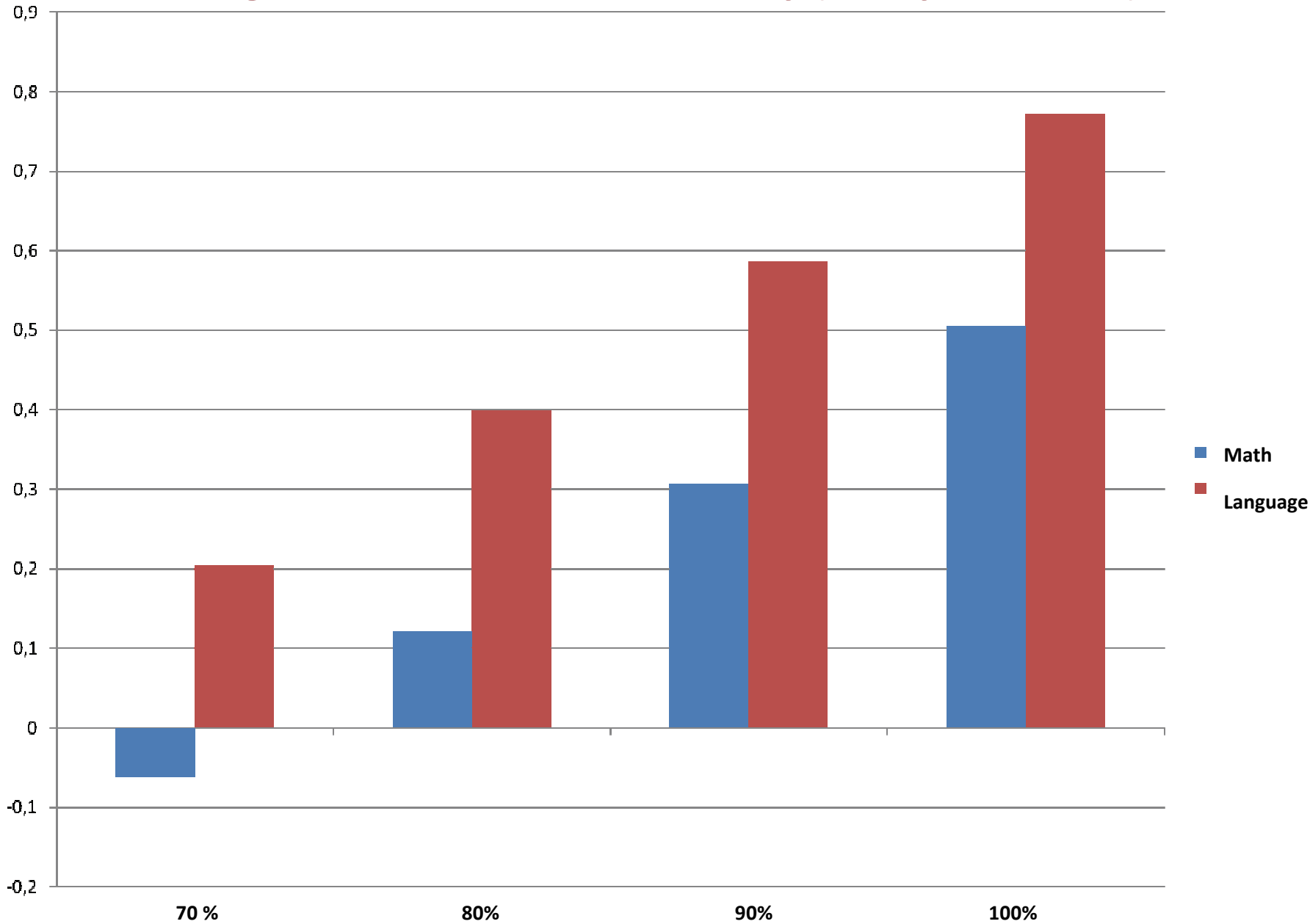
**Figure 5: Explaining Racial GAP - Math**

**What else are teachers  
rewarding?**

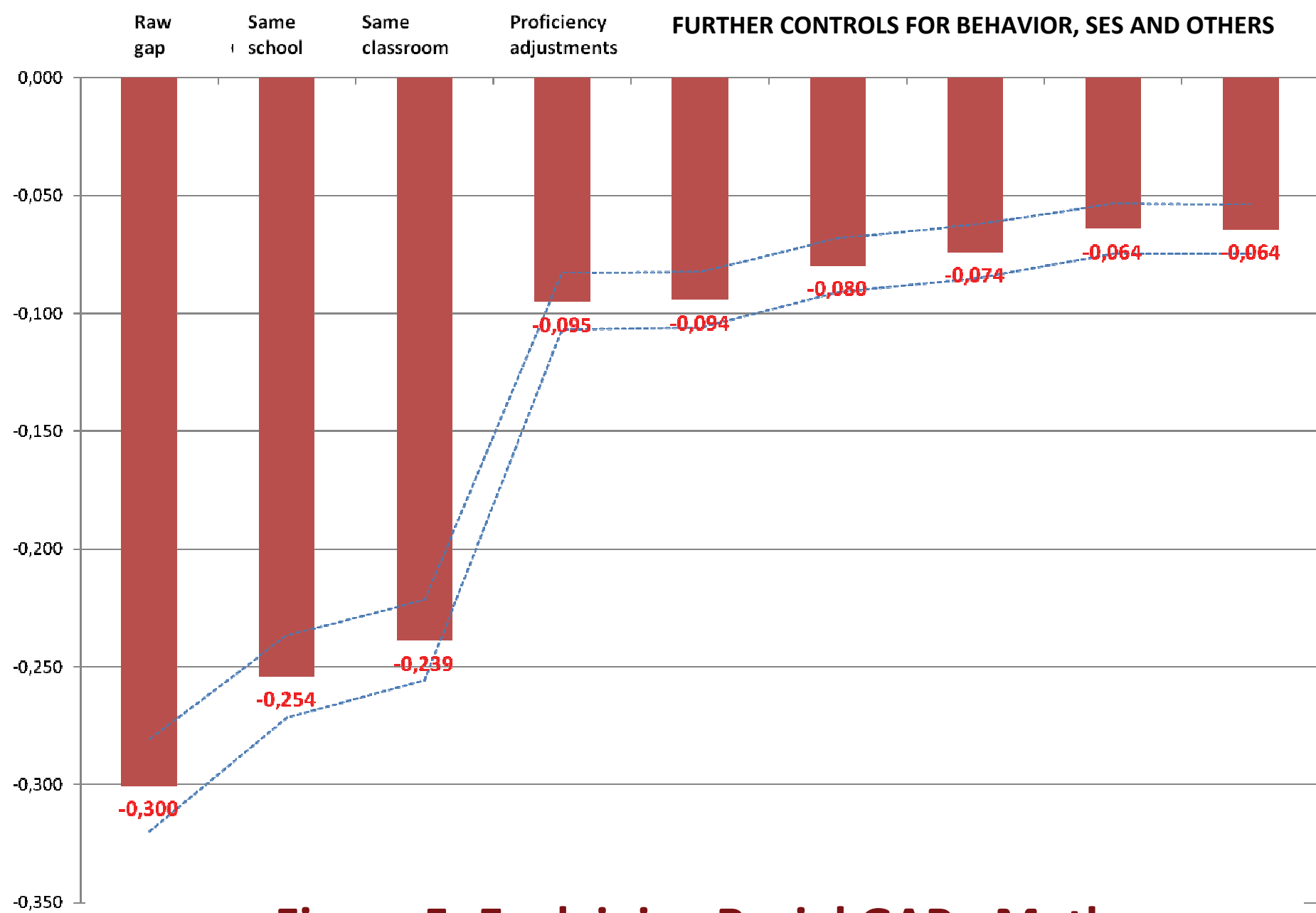
# Figure 8: Behavior/Personality (Proxy: Physical Ed. Grades)



# Figure 9: Behavior/Personality (Proxy: Absence)



**Did these (and others) explain  
away the racial gap?**



**Figure 5: Explaining Racial GAP - Math**

# Residual Gap

- **20%** of the difference between blacks and whites is not explained by the aspects we were able to control for...
- At this point:
  - Stereotypes may be influencing teachers in Brazilian classrooms
  - And that message is sent to parents!



# AND MORE: Boys will be Boys!

- Gender gaps are 3 to 4 times larger than racial gaps
- Distortion is not only ABSOLUTE, but also RELATIVE – girls are over-evaluated on Language by a wider margin than on Math
- This may induce field selection and labor market allocations that take women away from hard-science-related occupations
  - Longitudinal data collection in progress...

# Conclusion

- Racial and gender bias in assessments of school performance are prevalent;
- Policy makers need to pay closer attention to the role of school evaluations for information dissemination and accountability strategies
- Definition of standards and better look at what teachers see but policy makers don't
  - Are behavioral and personality development an important part of what we think schools should be helping our kids with?
  - We may also need standardized evaluations of child development.

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**THANK YOU!**