

# **Douglas Downey**

**Professor | Department of Sociology at The Ohio State University**

Columbus, OH, US

Expert in social stratification, education and family.

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## **Biography**

Social stratification, education, and family. Currently developing a new method for measuring school effectiveness that isolates school from non-school influences on learning. Also testing explanations for racial/ethnic differences in school performance, exploring the early determinants of inequality among young children, and assessing the consequences of family structure for children's well-being. A few years ago I was reading an article by Herbert Walberg that claimed that the average American 18 year-old has spent just 13% of their waking hours in school. "That's way too low," I recall thinking. I immediately grabbed a calculator and cranked out an estimate for the time my son (in third grade at the time) would eventually spend in school. I was surprised to come up with a similar figure. It turns out that the vast majority of American children's waking hours are spent outside of school. Ignoring this fact ends up distorting our understanding of how schools matter. For example, one claim about American schools is widely endorsed by both the general public and most academics: schools play an important role in generating and maintaining inequality. This assumption has shaped the sociology of education literature in important ways. And it has also driven policy proposals. But my research, which takes seriously the 87% of time children spend outside of school, suggests a rethinking of this view. It turns out that inequality (in reading and math skills) grows faster when school is out versus when it is in. We didn't know this before researchers started collecting data seasonally (that is, data separating the school and summer seasons). This surprising pattern prompts new questions about schools and inequality that are driving my research agenda. Are schools serving the disadvantaged really doing a poorer job than those serving the advantaged? And what school processes are responsible for the equalizing effect?

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## **Industry Expertise**

Education/Learning

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## **Areas of Expertise**

Gender, Class, & Race, Family

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## **Affiliations**

Sociological Research Association

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## **Education**

**Indiana University**

Ph.D Sociology

**Indiana University**  
M.A. Sociology

**Anderson University**  
B.A. History

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## **Accomplishments**

**Most Outstanding Faculty**  
2013 Department of Sociology

**Most Supportive Faculty Member**  
2013 Ohio State University Graduate Student Association

**Harlan Hatcher Arts and Sciences Distinguished Faculty Award**  
2011 Ohio State University

**Outstanding Faculty Service Award, Arts and Sciences**  
2010 Ohio State University

**Alumni Award for Distinguished Teaching,**  
2007 Ohio State University

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