
DID YOU KNOW? CULTURAL DISPARITIES AND NEEDS

Courtesy of NAGC Research and Evaluation Network

Under/ Overrepresentation

Since 1978 there has been an overrepresentation in the identification of Asians and Whites in gifted education and an underrepresentation of African Americans, Latino/as and Native Americans.

Yoon and Gentry (2009) disaggregated data for each state over a four-year period to determine the representation of various ethnic and racial groups in gifted education. They found that trends differ greatly by state but that in general, African American, Latino/a, and Native American student remain underrepresented in gifted programs.

African-American Needs

An estimated 500,000 Black and Hispanic students in the United States are not having their educational needs met in school.

Ford (2010) identified three major ideologies that continue to contribute to the underrepresentation of culturally different students in gifted education programs: deficit thinking; colorblindness (culture-blindness); and White privilege. “No one variable or factor is responsible for underrepresentation; instead, a confluence of factors is at work. Families, educators, decision makers, and peers contribute to underrepresentation” (p. 33).



Cultural Change

Moll (2010) honors two landmark cases in education, *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), discussing their far reaching effects and relevance still today.

Authors have noted several similarities between the *Mendez* and *Brown* cases, including a rejection of the argument of separate but equal schools. “Lest we forget, however, we are now in the middle of enormous social and cultural transformations in education, brought about by changing demographics. It would have been difficult, for the participants in the *Mendez* and *Brown* cases to foresee that the children they defended – still considered ‘minorities’ in the field of education, still in great part segregated, still in great part poor, and still categorized as deficient and sorted through the injudicious application of standardized tests – would in a few decades become the majority in schools throughout the country. But they are” (p. 454).

Community Influences

Neighborhood effects research has been a focus for the past 30 years, examining possible links between neighborhoods and the education of African Americans.

Johnson (2010) reviewed 45 studies that looked at neighborhood effects on educational opportunities for African Americans. The studies examined the structural compositions of the neighborhoods, social processes, and outcomes of residential opportunities programs. An analysis of the findings indicates “that the education of African Americans appears less affected by neighborhood conditions than the two perspectives suggest, at least as they are currently conceptualized and measured” (p. 527). The author points out potential problems with the findings in these studies and suggests possible directions for future research, including looking not only at examining influences of the neighborhood versus influences of school, but when neighborhoods play an important role in educational development (p. 565-567).

References

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- Yoon, S. Y. & Gentry, M. (2009). Racial and ethnic representation in gifted programs: Current status of and implications for gifted Asian American students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 53, 121-136. doi: 10.177/0016986208330564.

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