

An Analysis of the Factors That Impact Academic Achievement Among Asian American, African-American, and Hispanic Students

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ABSTRACT

The learning-achievement gap among minority and white students is increasing. However, Asian American students out perform white and other minority students. Even though Asian Americans have experienced the same atrocities as other minority groups, they continue to achieve at high levels. It is important to determine the factors that contribute to their success and to implement these factors into the educational practices of other minority students.

Becoming a second-rate economic power house will be the destiny of America unless it can match the educational performance of its rivals abroad in Asia. (Staples, 2005) UNICEF conducted a study on the effectiveness of educational systems in the world. The United States ranked 18 out of 24 nations evaluated, with

Asian nations ranking in the top three. (Wu, 2005) Asian American students partake in the same American education as their African-American, Hispanic, and White-American counterparts, and outperform every ethnic group.

The purpose of this article is to determine what factors contribute to the high performance rate of Asian American students compared with African-Americans, and Hispanics students in large urban school districts. Some of the components investigated in the study will include the parental involvement, study habits, and time spent on task. The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study has shown that there vast difference in those areas. (Wu, 2005) Asian Americans students taught in a predominately Asian community have strong influences of some of the components found in Asian curriculums that contain those components stated above.

Asian American students have been known as the model minority because of the successes they have acquired in education. Quite often, Asian Americans are switched back and forth from white to minority due to their achievement. In 1999, College Board sponsored a study of educational achievement that specifically excluded Asian Americans from the definition of minority. By any dictionary definition, Asian Americans are a minority. Even if they have or alleged to have done well in school, they remain a minority. The Center for Equal Opportunity has also done research to explain why it is difficult to place Asian Americans in a category. (Crawford 2000) At the advanced reading level, Whites and Asians were ahead of Hispanics and Blacks by more than smaller; at the Proficient level. In math, Asians did much better than Whites. (2000)

Even though education is supposed to be consistent across the nation, it is not because states live up to national standards in their own way. This study goes beyond the educational variance among the states and looks to find factors that make students from ethnic groups successful in education. Minorities and whites of course approach their education in different way because of their upbringing and the countries in which they are citizens. Voluntary minorities, such as Asian Americans, see the United States as land of opportunity compared to their situation back home. They are generally optimistic and trusting of U.S. society, and work hard in school and in their jobs to succeed. Consequently, the parents of voluntary immigrants generally hold their youth, not the schools accountable for school success and failures. (Shimahara, 2001)

The factors that may contribute to the achievement in Asian American students are Parent involvement, time spent on task and study habits. The National Center for Education Statistics has found that these are the leading factors that determine or contribute to the success of Asian American students.

Parental Involvement

This factor that may impact the academic success of minorities has major influences on minority students. The percentage of students in kindergarten through grade 12 whose parents reported taking them to a public library in the past month was higher for Asian American students (65%) than for White (41%), Black (49%) and Hispanic

(44%) students. Students whose parents were involved in their educational success noted that they knew what courses to take to become eligible for any college of their choice. However, students that were unaware of what courses to take to be eligible for college had very little to no parental involvement. (1999) Parents of the students that are unaware of what courses to take were the minority students except for the Asian American students who experienced great parental involvement.

Time Spent on Task

Time spent on task also determine how students achieve. Time spent on task may include reading a book, participating in extra-curricular activities or watching television. Among minorities, though all groups spend time studying or doing class assignments, Asian Americans spend the most time on school assignments and studying. Other minority students spend time watching television, playing a sport or on the phone. If minority and low-economic students come to school with less ability to concentrate and put forth less effort on schoolwork, this alone could account for their making less academic progress during the year. Some ethnic students endure curfews in terms of time spent on the phone and going out on the weekends. These curfews are in place to allow time in academics. (Elmasry, 2005) Nonetheless, these curfews do not impose much influence on the academic success of African American and Hispanic students. Research by Steven Ingles indicates that Asian Americans spend more time on homework outside of school than Blacks, Hispanics and Whites.

Study Habits

Students that practice study habits in their education may study in groups, individually, or attend tutorials. Study habits are a reflection of the students' culture. If one culture believes in a single person making way for the family, then that person is most likely studying by themselves. On the other hand, if the culture perpetuates family togetherness and encouragement, then group study forum will most likely result. However, not all grouping is favored. Ability grouping, which can be proposed by the teacher, disproportionately and unfairly places ethnic groups at a disadvantage by reducing their opportunities to learn. It is best that if the study group is study habit used, groups based on ability is not productive for ethnic groups. It has been found that Black students study for 8 to 10 hours a week, typically alone. Chinese students study for 14 hours a week, working 8 to 10 hours alone and about 4 hours with other students, checking each other's answers and their English. Their family members quiz them regularly and they work on problems kept in a public file in the library. Unlike Black

students, they know exactly where they stand relative to the rest of their classmates. (1990)

In conclusion, determining if Asian American students out-perform other minority groups because of the Asian influenced characteristics practiced in predominately Asian schools will give educators in this country a perspective on how to solve the American educational problems. Many efforts by the Mathematics Achievement Partnership Under Achieve, Inc., and a Nation at Risk have been used to correct the problems in American education. Discovering what causes the disparities in academic performance among minority groups will lead to the increase of America's international rank. Minority groups will perform at a rate that is similar, thus allowing educational leaders to plan ways to further improve education in America. The creation of educational reforms is a waste of time and effort because of the wide range of inequalities present in the American education system. Until a solution has been found to close the gap among the minority populations, education will continuously be reformed in vain.

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