

The Impact of Racism In Education

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Education Disparities in Minnesota

- **Minnesota consistently ranks among the highest performing states for education quality**
- **But also has some of the worst racial disparities in the nation in education (also homeownership, employment & poverty)**
- **A recent report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis confirmed wide, deep and persistent racial disparities in graduation rates, standardized test scores and college readiness indicators between white students and students of color AND found that educational disparities span all parts of the state and all types of schools**

Perceptions of Education Disparities

- In a 2016 Study of how Americans think about test score gaps in education, participants were asked “How much of the difference in test scores between white students and Black students can be explained by discrimination against Blacks or injustices in society? Nearly half (44%) of respondents chose “None.” Only 10% chose “A great deal.”

How Did We Get Here?

- **A long history of segregated schools with schools serving Black students receiving significantly less funding**
 - **School funding mechanisms based on property taxes ensured more affluent communities had better funded schools**
 - **Historic racism in housing severely hampered Black people's ability to build wealth through home ownership, and helped concentrate poverty in Black communities (e.g. redlining by banks & U.S. Government which prevented access to mortgage loans; racially restrictive covenants which prevented home purchases in white communities and forced Blacks into specific neighborhoods; lack of access to GI Bill homeowner benefits; harassment of Blacks purchasing homes in white communities)**
 - **More recently, predatory lending practices targeted to the Black community during the Great Recession, and mass purchase of foreclosed homes by investors have led to significant loss of home ownership in Black communities**

How Did We Get Here?

- Segregation was a legacy of slavery in U.S.; accompanied by Jim Crow laws that limited rights and access for Black Americans
- The Supreme Court declared racial segregation in schools to be unconstitutional in the landmark 1954 ruling Brown v. Board of Education.
 - Efforts to integrate were met with violent resistance in some quarters
 - In many communities, Black schools were closed and Black students were bussed to white schools; many Black teachers lost jobs

Segregation

- **As numbers of Black students in public schools grew, many whites left for less integrated suburban public or private schools**
- **Currently schools in America have largely re-segregated. According to a recent New York Times article, “More than half of the nation’s schoolchildren are in racially concentrated districts, where over 75 percent of students are either white or nonwhite.”**
- **In addition, school districts are often segregated by income. The nexus of racial and economic segregation has intensified educational gaps between rich and poor students, and between white students and students of color.**

Segregation

- School district efforts to desegregate schools have been constrained by Supreme Court rulings that such plans must be “narrowly construed.”
- In a 2007 Supreme Court case striking down a school district desegregation plan Chief Justice Roberts stated: “The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.”
- Justice Sotomayor, in a 2014 Supreme Court decision, stated: “The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to speak openly and candidly on the subject of race, and to apply the Constitution with eyes open to the unfortunate effects of centuries of racial discrimination.”

Minnesota

- In 2015, Alejandro Cruz-Guzman sued the State of Minnesota alleging that racially and socioeconomically homogenous Twin Cities schools deprive students of color their constitutional right to an “adequate” education. The case argues that Minnesota knowingly allowed towns and cities to set policies and zoning boundaries that led to segregated schools, lowering test scores and graduation rates for low-income and nonwhite children.
- The plaintiffs want the court to declare that, on principle, racially or socioeconomically imbalanced public schools are unconstitutional.
- The case is currently in mediation, and if not successful, will go to trial in 2021.

Minnesota

- **Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank President Neel Kashkari and former Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Alan Page recently called on Minnesotans to pass a constitutional amendment to give every child in Minnesota an equal right to a quality education.**
- **Having not been updated since it was first enacted in 1857, Minnesota's current constitution requires establishment of a uniform and efficient public school system.**
- **By making a quality education a civil right, the goal of the proposed constitutional amendment is to put power in the hands of parents to hold the state accountable for delivering quality education for all Minnesota children.**

How Does Racial Inequity Show Up in Schools Today?

- **Segregation**
- **What we Teach**
- **Discipline**
- **Perception and Expectations**
- **Higher Education Challenges**

What We Teach

- **If you've never attended schools in different states, you may not have thought about the vast ways in which the exact same material can vary depending on a pupil's school, school district and instructional materials.**
- **How material is taught impacts students' (and communities') world view and understanding of history**
- **Textbooks are supposed to teach us a common set of facts about who we are as a nation, but the influence of religion and politics in instructional material can skew those facts.**

What We Teach

- In 1619, twenty Africans captured in Africa were forcibly transported across the Atlantic Ocean on a slave ship, and arrived at the first British colony in Jamestown, Virginia. They became the first enslaved Africans in the colonies.
- How we teach the history of slavery and its legacy in our country has changed over time and still varies across the country.
- Hazen's Elementary History of the United States: A Story and a Lesson, a popular 1903 textbook told the story this way –
 - “The settlers bought them....and found them so helpful in raising tobacco that more were brought in and slavery became a part of our history.”

What We Teach

- A 1916 text, *A Child's History of North Carolina*, also focused on slavery's profitability and erased its violence and degradation:
Enslaved people “were allowed all the freedom they seemed to want, and were given the privilege of visiting other plantations when they chose to do so. All that was required of them was to be in place when the work time came. At the holiday season they were almost as free as their masters.”
- The text also took pains to absolve slaveholders of any responsibility for slavery:
“Slavery was already in existence, however, through no fault of theirs [slaveholders]. They had the slaves and had to manage as best they could the problem of what to do with them.”

What We Teach

- **How textbooks discuss slavery still varies widely across the states; but texts often minimize or overlook its brutality, the perspective of the enslaved, and slavery's long-term impact in our country.**
- **In 2019, the New York Times *1619 Project* reframes this history by placing Black Americans and the impact of slavery in our country at the center of the narrative. Not surprisingly, this new framing – which also directly confronts the white supremacist views underlying slavery and which helped shape our constitution - has prompted both significant praise and criticism**

What We Teach – 1619 Project

- **“Out of slavery – and the anti-black racism it required – grew nearly everything that has truly made America exceptional: its economic might, its industrial power, its electoral system, its diet and popular music, the inequities of its public health and education, its astonishing penchant for violence, its income inequality, its slang, its legal system and the endemic racial fears and hatreds that continue to plague it to this day. The seeds of all that were planted long before our official birth date, in 1776, when the men known as our founders formally declared independence from Britain.” 1619 Project, New York Times**

Consider

- **The ways the history you learned in school affected your understanding (or lack of understanding) of slavery, Jim Crow laws and other race- based policy that shaped our current landscape and limited educational, wealth building and other opportunities for Black Americans and other people of color.**
- **How a Black child is affected by her invisibility in most narratives of American history - as though her people did not contribute to the building of this country**

Consider

- **Half of all school-aged children are non-white. Of children's books published in 2013, though, only 10.5% featured a person of color. In 2016, this number doubled to 22%, but white is still the "default identity."**
- **Very few states require Holocaust education in their school systems and a 2018 survey showed that two-thirds of U.S. Millennials were not familiar with Auschwitz, the largest Nazi death camp complex where more than 1.1 million people were gassed, shot or starved, including nearly one million Jews. Overall, the Nazis murdered 6 million Jews during the Holocaust, plus millions of Roma, LGBT people and others.**

Discipline

- **School disciplinary policies disproportionately affect Black students**
- **Zero tolerance discipline has resulted in Black students facing disproportionately harsher punishments than white students in public schools**
- **Black boys are suspended and expelled at 3x the rate of white boys**
- **Black girls are six times more likely to be suspended than white girls**
- **Students suspended or expelled for a discretionary violation are nearly 3x more likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year**
- **Students with learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse or neglect are often subject to harsher disciplinary action**

Discipline

- **Zero tolerance policies that criminalize minor infractions of school rules, police in schools, and suspensions and expulsions that push kids out of school and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems facilitate a “School to Prison Pipeline”**
 - **Police stationed in schools often move discipline from the school to the juvenile or criminal justice system. Schools with police officers have 5x the number of arrests for disorderly conduct; schools are more likely to have a police officer if 50% or more of their students are Black**

Discipline

- **Zero-tolerance policies tend to funnel vulnerable students out of schools and into prisons, low-income jobs and poverty. Black girls and other girls of color are susceptible to zero-tolerance policies that can dehumanize them and make them feel uncared for.**

Perceptions & Discipline

- Stereotypes and gender-based punishments may play a role in the over-disciplining of Black girls. Many Black girls believe their teachers viewed them negatively as girls who "can't be trusted," or girls who are "loud" and "rowdy," "ghetto" and "ignorant." The demeanor of Black girls was often misinterpreted as defiant or as challenging authority when in fact the girls were simply engaged, curious and expressive.
- “Although our modest study can only provide a few avenues for further exploration, it is possible that black girls face a classic intersectional burden. Many studies tell us that blackness is associated with aggression, and we also know that girls and women are excessively sanctioned for gender-transgressive behavior. Those two dynamics together — a perception of aggressiveness that is racially coded, and the additional penalty for being assertive as a female — may contribute to the added vulnerability that black girls face in comparison to other girls.”

(Columbia University law professor Kimberle Williams Crenshaw and her associates, Priscilla Ocen and Jyoti Nanda - [Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected](#))

Perceptions & Discipline

- **A groundbreaking study by the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality provides data showing that adults view Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like than their white peers, especially in the age range of 5–14. The report builds on similar results that have emerged from studies of adult perceptions of Black boys.**
- **Research revealed that beginning at the age of 10, Black boys are more likely than their white peers to be misperceived as older, viewed as guilty of suspected crimes, and face police violence if accused of a crime.**
- **In light of proven disparities in school discipline, the study suggests that the perception of Black girls as less innocent may contribute to harsher punishment by educators and school resource officers.**

Perceptions & Discipline

The Study found that compared to white girls of the same age, survey participants perceive that:

- **Black girls need less nurturing**
- **Black girls need less protection**
- **Black girls need to be supported less**
- **Black girls are more independent**
- **Black girls know more about adult topics**
- **Black girls know more about sex**

These results are profound, with far-reaching implications. They reveal a potential contributing factor to the disproportionate rates of punitive treatment in the education and juvenile justice systems for Black girls.

Furthermore, the view that Black girls need less nurturing, protection, and support and are more independent may translate into fewer leadership and mentorship opportunities in schools.

Perceptions & Expectations

- **Unconscious biases in white teachers, who favor a “colorblind” approach may cause unintentional harm to their students**
 - Teachers are most often motivated by real concern for their students, but their own lack of exposure, bias, and discomfort acknowledging race may limit their effectiveness
- **Early acknowledgment of differences can prepare students for a diverse world**
 - Acknowledging and affirming difference is important at every age, but can prepare preschoolers to talk about race and difference and work against bias
- **Positive outcomes sparked by same-race role models can potentially shrink the education achievement gap and usher more Black & brown students into colleges and universities**

Perceptions & Expectations

- **Black students who'd had just one Black teacher by 3rd grade were 13% more likely to enroll in college – and those who'd had two were 32% more likely.**
- **Teacher's beliefs about a student's college potential can become a self-fulfilling prophecy**
 - **Every 20% increase in a teacher's expectations raised the actual chance of finishing college for white students by about 6% and 10% for Black students**
 - **However, because Black students had the strongest endorsements from Black teachers, and Black teachers are underrepresented in schools, they may have less chance to reap the benefit of high expectations than their white peers**

(These findings by researchers from Johns Hopkins University and American University, were published by the National Bureau of Economic Research.)

Perceptions & Expectations

- **These findings highlight the importance of role models and the need for greater diversity in our education workforce**

Higher Education

- The original Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was invented in 1926 by Carl Brigham, a Princeton alumnus and avowed eugenicist who created the test to uphold a racial caste system. He advanced this theory of standardized testing as a means of upholding racial purity in his book *A Study of American Intelligence*. The tests, he wrote, would prove the racial superiority of white Americans and prevent “the continued propagation of defective strains in the present population”—chiefly, the “infiltration of white blood into the Negro.”
- The SAT is still under attack for bias against poor, Black and Hispanic students.

Higher Education

- **Poor Black and brown students experience greater adversity while on campus;**
 - **Most colleges and universities do not provide the support these students need (e.g. food insecurity; need to work multiple jobs; lack of familiarity with processes- “office hours” etc)**
- **Higher levels of student loan debt are shouldered by students of color; and they face more significant challenges in repaying their loans due to discrimination in hiring.**

How can we support youth of color?