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Closing the Gaps and Addressing the Disparities: Time for Action!

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Abstracts

Addressing Disparities by Focusing on the Gaps in Racism Awareness

Sarah Buila, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois.

A white educator presents a narrative that reflects her journey in teaching about racism, discrimination, oppression, and privilege. Racial disparities in education are related to broader racial inequalities in society and should concern every individual in higher education despite their racial background. The author identifies issues related to teaching white students about racism and white privilege while sharing some teaching tips, organized as follows: Educator reflections, classroom environment, experiential exercises, classroom management, and activism.

One Style Does Not Fit All: Facilitating Cultural Differences in Teaching

Debra Ferdinand, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Workforce Education and Development, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois.

Uche Onyebadi, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, School of Journalism, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois

Growing cultural diversity on U.S. college campuses requires that faculty are equipped to accommodate for the cultural differences among their students. This descriptive study addresses this issue and examines students' perceptions on accommodating their cultural and learning differences in teaching in a University's Workforce Education and Development (WED) program. Participants comprised graduate students with one or more years of enrolment in a WED program. Data were collected using a self-reported survey consisting of open- and close-ended questions that included students' perceptions on responsive teaching strategies for culturally diverse students and suggestions for improvements. Study findings indicate that WED teaching strategies are insufficiently responsive to students' learning styles and suggest that cultural differences need to be given greater consideration in teaching delivery.

Closing the Minority Gap in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Fields by Utilizing Service-Learning Mentoring

Cynthia Sims, Ed.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Workforce Education and Development, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois

Minority workforce representation in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers has grown in the last several years; however, there is still a gap between racial groups. Although several programs and policies have been implemented to prepare minorities for STEM fields, more initiatives are necessary to ensure these fields increase in diversity at the rate minority groups grow in the United States. P-20 service-learning mentoring is one approach that can introduce prospective minority high school students to the STEM fields, specifically Information Technology (IT), and prepare them to pursue and succeed in IT careers.

Equal Education Opportunity and the School Choice Disparity for Poor Students in Grades K-12

Jennifer C. Herring, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, College of Education and Human Services, University of Illinois-Springfield, Springfield, Illinois

Students from low income families in the United States need opportunities that will elevate them to a position of choice in public, secular, or religious schools. This article examines the following: 1) the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) landmark ruling that established into law the concept of equal educational opportunity; 2) parents' rights to choose the best schooling for their children in a system that requires mandatory school attendance between the ages of 5-18 years old; 3) several studies' focus on the benefits of school choice options for poor students; 4) examination of data on low income students from a local school district's twenty-four elementary schools.

The Impact of Family Structure on Children's School Enrollment in Kenya

Dorothy O. Rombo, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Family Social Science, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota. JaneRose Njue, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, School of Family Consumer and Nutrition Science, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois.

To determine the impact of family structure and composition on children's school enrollment, hierarchical logistic regression was used on a random sample of 5,164 children drawn from the 1999 Kenya micro census data. Results indicate that control variables accounted for 16% of variance, while family structure and composition accounted for 2% of variance. Individual variables such as age, socio-economic status, and rural residency increased the likelihood of school enrollment. In addition, living with siblings in the household increased the odds of enrollment by a ratio of 1.08, while family size reduced odds by a ratio of .95. The reduced odds of enrollment for girls indicate that gender discrimination still exists. Findings have identified large family size as a risk factor. Recommendation for further research and policy implications are made.

African American Students in Special Education Programs: National, State, and Local Trends

Amy Rosenstein, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Special Education, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois.

This study examines the representation of African American students in special education programs at the national, state, and district level and more specifically in Illinois. Data from the 25th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a review of empirical studies, and Office of Civil Rights court monitoring reports for one district in Illinois were used to identify areas of disproportionate representation in special education and stimulate the discussion on the implications of this data. Data consistently indicate over-representation in areas of mental retardation and emotional disturbance. Implications of this information and recommendations for change are included.

Effective Support Systems for African American Male College Students

Carol Logan Patitu, Ph.D., Associate Dean & Professor, Fulbright Senior Scholar, College of Education, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois.

Jocelyn Tejeda, House Advisor, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York.

Desiree A. Williams, Residence Hall Director & Program Coordinator, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York.

Fred A. Bonner II, Ed.D., Associate Professor, College of Education and Human Development,

Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

This study examined support systems of African American male college students at a large, predominantly white institution (PWI). Of 493 African American male college students enrolled in a predominantly white, southern research institution, 185 individuals (38%) completed the instrument. Participants completed a ten-item questionnaire developed by the researchers, entitled, "Survey on Effective Student Support Systems to Meet the Needs of African American Male College Students." The participants referred to various support systems including organizations, people, campus services, and religion. Recommendations are offered based on each of these themes. The authors concluded that many of the solutions to the lack of viable support systems impacting students of color, particularly African American male students in PWIs, can be addressed through their use of viable support systems.

Media and Marriage: An Analysis of the Portrayals of African American Marriages in Television Sitcoms

Coreen Jackson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Communication, Tennessee State University, Nashville, Tennessee.

Using George Gerbner's (1977) cultivation hypothesis, this study investigated the portrayals of African American marriages in Black television sitcoms. Through a literature review and a survey administered to 101 marriage experts and others at the 2007 National Smart Marriage Conference in Denver, Colorado, findings revealed a mixed and contradictory view of African American marriages on television. Although some portrayals of strong African American families are shown, such as "The Cosby Show," portrayals of unhealthy families outweigh portrayals of strong healthy families. A mixed depiction of Black husbands and a negative portrayal of Black wives cause marriage experts concern about the ramifications of such programming on Black youths, and the possible discouragement of eligible Blacks from marriage.