

High School Dropout Rates Among Minority Students in a Northern California Suburban Area

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Abstract

This study which has much of its base in the Education, Excellence & Equity (E3) program is about the dropout rates among minority students within a certain county in Northern California. Why are minority students dropping out at higher rates than their white counterparts? The research hypothesis is that the dropout rate is higher among minority students because of less economic stability, less parental involvement in school, and disengagement in class due to instructional material that is not culturally relevant.

This research also addresses what schools and teachers can do to help keep minority students engaged in school. The goal of the study is to try to find ways to help close the achievement gap among students within this focus district.

Chapter 1

Introduction

One of my true passions in life is education. I find great enjoyment spending time within a classroom, or a quiet nook in a library. I originally decided I wanted to become a teacher because it would allow me the opportunity to be around topics that I loved and to pass on educational skills to the next generation of students. It is important to me that the students I teach have an opportunity to succeed and have a good time in the class but that I also hold them to high academic standards which will give them the best opportunity in life. Teaching in a lot of ways is the ability to spark a flame of intellectual curiosity, which will lead students to question and research long after they have left the classroom.

Throughout my educational career, which was marked by an abundance of history classes and an extended stay in the city of San Diego, I was fortunate enough to have teachers who were knowledgeable in their field and who also cared about my growth as a student and as a person. I also had the advantage of having a family that was fairly stable financially which allowed me to focus on my studies and not on where I would be living a week down the road or where my next meal was coming from.

My first full time teaching job was teaching 8th grade history and English at a suburban middle school in Northern California. Although the experience was often times rocky I am thankful to have been given that opportunity. I learned so much about teaching and myself as a person during that time. One of the many things that I remember from the first few weeks of that job were the groans that I would receive when I asked the class to open their history books so that we could start a new unit. As someone who loved attending history and English classes during my formative years, student negative responses in class shocked me. It was during this

time that I began wondering why the formal school experience was not a pleasant one for certain students and why certain groups of students were more likely to be in trouble at school and ultimately drop out of school completely.

This paper is about at risk and minority students and the dangers they face within the school system. Some of the topics include why minority students are dropping out at a higher rate compared to other groups, what the school system can do to better service these students, and what the future prospects are for students who do not graduate from high school.

Statement of Problem

Minority students are disengaged in school and are more likely to drop out before the completion of high school than their white counterparts. The disengagement can be seen in lower grades evidenced in standardized test scores, high rates of disciplinary action and finally in the overall dropout rates within the district. I want to find out why these students are being turned off in the classroom and what, if anything, teachers and schools can do about the problem.

When minority students do make it through high school. they are often ineligible to take college courses based on the workload that they took in high school. How many minority students are steered down a path where college is not a viable option? Are minority students receiving appropriate counseling services in terms of signing up for high school classes that meet the entrance requirements for four-year universities? Minority students are often ill prepared for the jobs of the future when they leave high school.

This research is an attempt to document information in general about minority students within a specific school district in Northern California. What do the dropout rates among minority students look like in comparison to their white counterparts? In the context of the

Excellence and Equity in Education (E3)³ study I explore the major differences among three groups of students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to find out why minority students are disengaged within the classroom, and more likely to drop out of school than their white and Asian counterparts. By keeping these at risk students focused on academic lessons and engaged in the class in general it is anticipated that we can close the achievement gap of minority students in this Northern California suburban school district.

Secondarily I explore the different achievement levels of minority students in schools. By identifying the different needs of the students and what each group's strengths are, my hope is to encourage students to do their best work inside the classroom.

Research Questions

Looking at high school dropout rate in a suburban area one notices the increased number of minority students that do not complete high school. What are the factors that influence high dropout rates among a certain group? What are ways in which we can close the achievement gap? Why are schools in our district so segregated? What are the problems with these highly segregated schools? How can teachers and schools make subject matter culturally relevant to students?

Theoretical Rationale

The work of Geneva Gay (2002) is extremely important within this paper, specifically her work on culturally responsive teaching. The idea of culturally responsive teaching refers to knowing multiple histories, and knowing members of the class. Awareness of other student's cultures makes sense and may serve to help students develop a personal connection with their lessons. .

If one knows that a certain group does poorly with a specific type of instruction, it is important for the teacher to shift instructional approach to build a connection. If Latino students do not do well with lecture-based instruction at the middle school level it is important to introduce them to this style but also understand why there may be some resistance to the change. It is also important to find strategies that are successful for certain group. By using these strategies the students get used to success and accomplishment in the classroom and it better prepares them for the changes that are to come.

Culturally based learning is also an important tenant in the E3 program. Bringing in a student's culture into the class can be an important way to promote student engagement. E3 also stresses a three level tier in their model. The three different tiers are important because students at different levels do better with different types of instruction. Identifying the level of the student is important because lumping students into one category based on their race does great harm to student development.

In her work "Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching" Gay (2002) once again stresses the importance of multicultural education. Multicultural education in the classroom means exposing students to a wider variety of cultures and histories. Multicultural education also makes sure to praise different contributions that have come from different cultures.

For the best possible implementation of multicultural education within the classroom Gay stresses that teacher training and education needs to be at the forefront (2002). All too often teachers are put into diverse classrooms where they do not know how to handle the situation, and the diverse students that they are encountering. To really connect with the diverse students in the classroom it is essential to know their histories and background. Being able to relate to one's class and build relationships is vital going forward in time together in class. When trust is built in

the classroom it is easier for all systems within the room to operate. The students also begin to care about the teacher and the lessons in general. When this happens it is easier to get what is called the buy in from students.

Another benefit of instituting multicultural education within a diverse classroom is that the content of the lesson is often more connected to the students in terms of their lives. When students are able to picture the events and sympathize with certain figures they are more likely to be engaged in the lesson and absorb more of the facts and lessons.

A common misconception about multicultural education is the idea that certain subjects cannot benefit from including this type of instruction into the curriculum. Gay is adamant that multicultural education can be worked into curriculum and that the reason teachers are often reluctant to change to this approach is because “many teachers do not know enough about the contributions that different ethnic groups have made to their subject areas” (Gay, 2002, p.107). This quote goes back to the point that Gay makes about getting the proper training so that one can be successful in a classroom filled with diverse students with different needs.

Assumptions

My assumption in beginning this research is that minority students are dropping out of school at a high rate because of unstable home/ personal lives, disconnection from the material taught in school, and a lack of student background in academic success strategies. Because the students do not have a background in the subject, and are behind in the material, they may act out in class as a defensive mechanism. By acting as if they hate the subject and the teacher they are putting up a front because they do not want to admit to others, or themselves that they are embarrassed.

Students have a hard time asking for help because they do not want their peers to look down on them and think that they are stupid. There is also more economic disadvantage among

minority students which leads to an increased dropout rate. Many minority students are expected to begin providing for their family right away, and this pressure often takes these students away from their education. Many minority students find it difficult to balance a demanding class load and also make enough money and work enough hours to help support their family financially.

There also needs to be a greater emphasis among minority student families on the importance of education. From talks that I have had with Latino students there is not a lot of priority on education. The general feeling among many of the youths is that goofing around and not taking class seriously is acceptable because college is not in the future anyways. Hopefully there will be a shift in this thinking if teachers can better relate to the minority students.

Another assumption is that schools are not focused on areas where Latino and African American students excel such as cultural resiliency, and navigational capacity. Attention to these areas of strength may influence increased student performance.

A final assumption is that E3 students in the different tiers will have different needs. Students who are at high risk have different learning strategies and study habits than students in the green tier. I am also making the assumption that much of the problems that Latino students/ and minority students in general are having in school is based on their economic situation and on the language gap that they must overcome.

Background and Need: Excellence and Equity in Education

The background and need portion of this paper comes from the E3 program. E3 is a program that was started in the fall of 2008 and is designed to foster excellence and equity in education. The program helps minority students improve their classroom skills and also trains the teacher to be more culturally aware in their teaching methods. E3 is interested in systemic change in which minority students are praised for the positive things that they bring to the classroom, such as

cultural resiliency. The E3 program envisions a day when teachers work with students to find creative solutions to problems as opposed to the current system where much of the classroom experience is strict memorization. Under the guidance of Dr. JuanCarlos Arauz I examined the methods of E3 and figuring out strategies that are helpful in improving engagement among Latino students.

The background data was collected by E3 members who visited various schools and compiled data. My responsibility was to sort through the data and develop a narrative description of the performance of high school students. The data illustrates dropout rates, influence of behavior problems on performance, and low grades. Even more of the data is available online at the California Department of Education site where enrollment statistics for all public schools within the state are posted.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Introduction

As much as I would like to think that I was the first person to stumble onto the idea of the achievement gap, and noticing that minority students are not performing as well as they could be within schools I cannot take credit for this. Having the opportunity to research and study the pervious literature has been incredibly enlightening as I go forward with my own ideas. One of the giants of the educational profession that has been enormously helpful in studying diverse classrooms and students has been Geneva Gay. Reviewing her work on multicultural education has proved to be a valuable endeavor.

From the literature I have also noticed that many of the problems that minority students are having in school have little to do with the student and more to do with the surroundings, and expectations of that student. When teachers hold students to lower standards it hurts the students potential growth as they are not challenged. When students are not challenged, and disengaged within the classroom you begin to see higher incidents of behavioral issues and higher dropout rates.

Historical Context

Looking at the dropout rate over time in this particular county is part of a larger study. What have been the trends when it comes to students dropping out of school? Are minority students more likely to finish high school at certain schools? If so what are the factors at the school that lead to the higher dropout rates. I plan on starting the study from the school year beginning 1997-98 and going through the present data. I feel that is important to have that much data because you

are able to see trends over time, as opposed to a smaller sample which has a higher chance at sampling error.

The E3 program, which has been hugely influential in my research, started in the year 2008 and was created by Dr. JuanCarlos Arauz. The mission statement from the start was to help at risk students navigate through high school and go on to college. By incorporating culturally relevant curriculum and training teachers to reexamine the traditional methods that they have used in the classroom E3 seeks to allow all students to reach their full potential. The history of E3 is marked by student achievement within the classroom and teacher training outside of the class.

The idea of culturally responsive teaching, as created by Gay (2002) goes back to the late 1990's. Gay talks at great length about creating culturally relevant curriculum to keep students engaged within the classroom. Gay also asks teachers to look inside themselves and make a commitment to teach more culturally relevant material, and to make an effort to understand their students.

Review of the Previous Literature

I reviewed the data from the county records. When I started doing my research I was reading more on background information on topics such as the achievement gap, and critical race theory in order to develop a balanced background on the subject of dropout rates.

Much of the background on the topic suggests factors such as economic status, and a lack of relevant curriculum as reasons why the dropout rate is higher among minority students. Attending predominantly segregated schools is also affecting the high dropout rate among minority students.

Yosso (2005) explores cultural wealth and cultural race theory within the school setting. The main points of the article focus on the illusion of cultural deficiencies, the absurdity of “normative values”, and the under rated strength of navigational capacity which minority students excel in. Navigational capacity is the ability to navigate through stressful situations and being able to change your personality based on your setting. The problem that Yosso sees in supposed normative values is that there is no such thing as normal and by praising a certain way above others one tears down other cultures and values. It is also important to note that individual families and students are not the root of the problem in terms of the achievement gap. By allowing schools to continue thinking that minority students are solely at fault for their poor performance is doing everyone an injustice.

Coleman (1998) focuses on the idea of social capital both in schools and on a broader community based level. Social capital is built on the idea of community and trust. When someone is rich in social capital they have a strong, trusting network around them, which enables them to accomplish things that would otherwise be impossible. When there is a sense of community or a common goal/ theme permeating a school the dropout rate at that school is lower. The example they use is at Catholic schools where much of the focus is tied to religion. Because of a commonality, in this case religion, the community comes together and social capital is built. Because there are more people looking out for each other the dropout rate is lower. My question about dropout rates in these settings would go back to economic situation, although I do like Coleman’s points.

In the article *Separate and Unequal 50 Years After Brown: California’s Racial Opportunity Gap* (2004) the main point of the article was to shed light on the amount of segregation that still exists within the state of California. California still has a great number of

schools that remain almost entirely segregated. In many of the non-white schools throughout the state there is a serious lack of materials, qualified teachers, money, and overall opportunity. The Bay Area and Los Angeles are especially segregated in their classrooms. In these non-white schools the buildings are often in a state of disrepair, and the school is at or above the capacity of students it should be housing.

Even when the signs of inequality are not as obvious as a building crumbling before one's eyes there is the subtle racist element to segregated schools. A hidden gap of students manage to navigate through high school and graduate only to find out that they have not taken the correct courses to be eligible to attend college. In this hidden gap of students the information, which may have steered a student to a different class selection, was not readily available. All too often the lack of information and assistance in choosing classes affects economically disadvantaged students, and segregated schools.

In the article *The Silent Epidemic* (2006) our author John Bridgeland looks at the problems students face when they make the decision to drop out of school. Problems such as disengagement in the class, financial responsibility, and high absences and poor overall grades are all major factors in dropping out. After looking at the problems which lead to dropping out Bridgeland then looks at the possibilities and opportunities (or lack thereof) of people who failed to graduate high school. The results that Bridgeland comes up with are striking as dropouts are much more likely to suffer from poverty, run-ins with the law, and higher rates of health problems such as obesity.

The majority of students surveyed expressed remorse that they chose to dropout and wish that they had stayed in school. In the answers that students gave many of them took

responsibility for dropping out, but many also felt frustration and even anger at the school for failing to do more to help them along.

Although it was not exactly a teaching manifesto in itself the book *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell (2000) brought up the significant point about how small changes can bring about a big change. Gladwell uses the example of a New York subway station as his example of a tipping point, but in the reading I was easily able to draw a parallel between that subway station and the institution of a school. Gladwell makes the point that if care is shown to a building or an establishment the culture of that place begins to change. This small shift in thinking and acting can effect large-scale change. One way in which schools can foster a positive atmosphere is with the physical appearance of a building. When a building is in a state of disrepair and there is graffiti and trash all around it gives students the idea that this type of behavior is tolerated. With this toleration towards miscreant behavior the overall expectations of the school goes down. One of the common problems seen in segregated schools in the Bay Area is run down facilities. These facilities hurt morale and bring down the expectations of schools.

Statistical Information

There is an abundant amount of statistical information on the raw data available. One of the omissions from the data is enrollment and graduation records at private high schools. Such information would be helpful because of a possible correlation between economic status and graduation rates. It would also be interesting to see the overall numbers of minority students in private high schools. Would the numbers be significantly lower? Are private high schools predominantly segregated much like many of the public schools throughout the San Francisco Bay Area?

It has been a real joy looking through the county archives, California Department of Education, and finding some sort of meaning within the available numbers. There is no shortage of ways to sort the information. As a researcher I am able to look at data based on gender, ethnicity, and geography.

From taking a closer look at the statistics I noticed several shocking trends that were prevalent in this particular suburban district. The high school dropout rates were higher among minority students compared to other groups. Of note is that the students who did manage to navigate through high school were often unprepared, and not eligible for four-year colleges. In one high school in particular, School 1, the numbers were especially striking. During a three-year stretch at this high school a total of 318 Latino senior students were enrolled. The dropout rate was high but not especially so among the state average. However what was striking was that out of the 318 Latino students that we started with in 9th grade only 18 were eligible to attend four-year colleges at the end of their time at the high school (California Department of Education, 2011).

Some schools within the country are graduating a lower percentage of minority students. Over the course of a dozen years the trends have remained consistent in many cases. The schools that are performing worse and are graduating a lower percentage of minority students are on the whole, schools that are racially segregated. This finding falls in line with the 2004 article by Oakes, *Separate and Unequal*, which suggests that segregated schools are prone to having a greater number of problems.

Interview with an Expert

I interviewed Dr. Arauz to get a better idea of the E3 program and what the most important ideas are. In the interview with Dr. Arauz I explored concepts such as social capital, cultural resiliency, and signs that point to dropping out of school.

My interview with Dr. Arauz took place on April 14, 2011. The interview took place at his office and occurred in the afternoon. To start the interview I asked a few lighter questions in order for both Dr. Arauz and I a chance to warm up our brains and to start thinking about education.

The first question I asked Dr. Arauz was about his background in education and how long he had been a teacher. From this question I found that Dr. Arauz had been a teacher from twenty years. He had gotten his start in teaching because he really liked working with kids and because he felt that he had a talent at relating to young people. Dr. Arauz credits a lot of the networking from his early teaching days to the game of basketball, which is something that is of interest to me as well.

Dr. Arauz started the E3 program, which has been one of the guiding lights in my research, in the fall of 2008. Dr. Arauz started this program because he believed in closing the achievement gap in education. Dr. Arauz saw an inequality in the way education was being implemented and he sought to make the education process more equitable. To make education more equitable E3 focuses on a few mission statements which are; work with all of the students in a school, train teachers differently so that they will see the talents and potential of the students, and bringing these changes to a systemic level.

When it comes to cultural resiliency, which is the ability to bounce back from tough or disappointing events, Dr. Arauz feels that minority students have a tremendous capacity. What is

lacking is schools tacking this type of learning into account. Being able to navigate through different, often challenging, environments should be rewarded within public schools. “To have this navigational capacity is a skill that is valued in the world in which we live in, but not in the schools themselves.” Dr. Arauz also believes that students within the class should have the opportunity to do hands on work and should not simply spend their time memorizing facts all day every day. In the classroom where different types of learning is encouraged a greater number of students are given an opportunity to excel. The system where all students sit quietly for an entire period does not relate or translate well into the modern world. The ability to sit quietly for hours on end is not as valued as the ability to think critically and being able to work well with your peers.

Another important point that I took away from my time with Dr. Arauz was that schools did not place enough emphasis on cultural wealth and the particular histories of a culture. Dr. Arauz believes that it is beneficial to teach the histories of students within your classroom, echoing the sentiments of Geneva Gay. By addressing and studying the histories of multiple groups of people you get buy in from the students whose histories might otherwise be ignored or marginalized. Another important change, which would be to the benefit of minority students, would be if teachers paid more attention to the idea of navigational capacity. Dr. Arauz feels that minority students have an incredible ability to navigate through difficult terrain and change who they are in different situations. By being able to navigate it shows the ability to remember and learn. However this type of learning is not often valued in the traditional classroom setting where sitting in a desk and taking notes for an hour is often normal practice.

The process of learning within the classroom would be a lot more effective if the assignments were often varied and included more hands on learning. The current system in

which students sit quietly with little to no input does them an injustice as it does not prepare them for the jobs that they will be competing for in the future. In Tony Wagner's book *The Global Achievement Gap* (2008), which was recommended to be by Dr. Arauz, Wagner suggests that the most essential skills to getting a job are not being taught in schools. The most important traits that employers are looking for in the current job market are people who can ask good questions, and people who can effectively function and excel within the team environment. Neither of these skills is stressed in today's classroom, as students are still required to memorize facts and not questions the ideas that they are absorbing.

When it came to the idea as to why minority students were dropping out at higher rates Dr. Arauz was adamant that in many cases the students were pushed out of school. What being pushed out of school means is that the school does not do enough to prevent student dropping out which can manifest itself in low expectations, absences not being recorded, and failure to monitor progress. Dr. Arauz also agreed with the 2006 study by Brideland that student dropout is more of a gradual process than a sudden decision. The reasons for the dropout were disengagement in class, family obligations, and economic hardships. One of the key factors to monitor when it comes to a student who may be on the verge of dropping out is overall attendance. When students start to miss class consistently it becomes easier for them to keep skipping class, which leads to the idea that they should stop showing up altogether.

In California there are a large number of segregated schools and this is due to primarily to economic factors. In areas where there is more affluence you find primarily white schools, and in poorer areas you find a greater portion of minority students. Dr. Arauz finds that there is often a general stigma associated with these poorer schools along with the problems described in Oakes

et al 2004 article. Expectations once again come up as a problem, according to Dr. Arauz “when students are not expected to do well they sink to these expectations.”

The final message that Dr. Arauz wanted to get across in the interview that we had was that student dropout and the achievement gap is not the students fault. Adults within the system, and the system in general need to be able to change and adjust to better serve these students and provide more for them.

Once again I would like to thank Dr. Arauz for taking the time to meet with me and answering my questions on these topics. I appreciated that he shared his ideas and expertise. He also provided information that helped me expand my research literature.

Chapter 3 Method

Description of Method

In many ways this paper is an extension of the quantitative research that I completed evaluating graduation rates. The bulk of the work leading up to this point lay in searching for, and recording the data on high school dropout rates. With excel spreadsheets in hand I recorded data on various groups of students at various high schools in a Northern California suburban school district.

Although the method remained the same for all of the groups that I examined the results differed greatly which was something that I predicted in the assumptions portion of the paper. In all there were three groups of students that I broke into categories: Latino, African American, and white. Once I broke the students into those three categories I looked at how each group did at the seven public high schools within the county.

Being in a classroom for six months in the capacity of 8th grade teacher also influenced my research as it allowed me to experience the student- teacher relationship first hand. The experience of being in the classroom also personalized the experience in a way that examining data is not capable of. During my time in the classroom I saw disengagement, and the general challenge of school for minority students.

The data sheets illustrate the following information: total 9th grade enrollment, total graduation, number of non grads, the number of graduates eligible for UC enrollment, and the number of high school grads not eligible for four year colleges.

Sample and Site

I focused my research within this one particular Northern California school district partially due to convenience. I wanted to see which schools helped and hurt minority students in the extreme case in terms of graduation rates. There were a total of seven high schools examined in the course of this study. All seven of the high schools are in the same county and are within a twenty-five mile radius of each other.

Access and Permissions

I gained access to the E3 program from my work at Dominican University. It was at Dominican where I was introduced to members of the E3 program. From there I was welcomed by their facility and allowed access to the data that they had uncovered. As it is a smaller group that is employed by E3 I was able to meet most members within the organization. Each member had a unique story but all were remarkably consistent in their message that they wanted to train teachers to be more culturally aware, and to help students achieve in school with the goal being acceptance to college.

When I had my own 8th grade class I was also fortunate enough to have members of the E3 program visit my room. During their visits I learned from their approach that every student had potential and talent. It was interesting to notice how they made the subjects they covered culturally relevant to the students in the class. On the days that E3 was in the classroom I noticed a greater deal of participation and buy in from the class as a whole. Members of the class looked forward to having E3 representatives in the class. The E3 members who were involved in the class also went out of their way to build relationships with the students, which is another core tenant of the E3 program.

The administrators at the school where I did my student teaching were also very helpful to me in terms of granting access. Whenever I had questions for them or needed assistance they were there to support me. The administrators also helped me set up interviews with teachers and served as icebreakers when I went to these meetings.

When it came to access to the statistical numbers that I found online I was easily admitted access as the information was public information found on a government website.

Ethical Standards

This study adhered to the ethical standards for conducting research using human subjects as articulated by the American Psychological Association (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2009). Additionally, the research proposal was reviewed by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, approved, and assigned number 8286.

Data Gathering Strategies

The data that I studied in this research project was compiled from the school years beginning in 1997 and ending in 2010. The reason for a larger sample size was to observe patterns over time. Would a particular school within the county continue to do well over time or would there be mixed results based on different classes of students. The idea of sustainability can be seen when you examine a school over an extended period of time. According to the work of Fullan (2005) schools that are interested in long-term sustainability show consistently good scores and solid graduation numbers. Many of the schools within this county however seem to be focused on quick fixes and how to improve standardized test scores while ignoring the achievement gap and how to reduce the dropout rate among minority students.

The data used in the research paper comes from the California Department of Education website. On the website there is a section called Dataquest where one can break down the statistical information needed by different categories, including but not limited to a student's race or gender.

Lastly I was able to gather data through a number of interviews. Information from informal interviews, which were influential, occurred during my student teaching period. I was able to ask veteran teachers their opinions on classroom disengagement and the dropout rate seen throughout the county's high schools. My interviews with key people in E3, of which I highlighted one in particular that I had with Dr. Arauz, were also helpful in building my knowledge about the subject. The members of E3 have experience in the field of education and it was valuable listening to what they had to say.

Data Analysis Strategies

In terms of analyzing information I examined the data compiled and organized it in categories to visually see how different groups of students perform academically at each school. If one race of students is doing especially poorly at a particular school it was interesting to look at the why. Is the school predominantly segregated? Are teachers teaching culturally relevant curriculum? What is the overall economic situation like at the school?

Comparisons between schools and population groups within the school also helped determine which schools are best servicing their student's populations. For example if a certain school routinely has a low graduation rate of Latino students it might mean that more effective measures should be put in place to help bridge the achievement gap.

Chapter 4 Findings

Description of Site, Individuals, Data

There are seven sites examined in this paper. Each site represents a public high school within a particular Northern California county. The sites themselves vary a great deal in terms of campus size, total student enrollment, and ethnic backgrounds of enrolled students. Most of the seven sites would be considered suburban schools, although two of the schools in the northern part of the county are on the fringe of being rural sites.

Student population and background were different at all seven of the high schools examined. The specific numbers are attached on the charts at the end of this paper but in general the breakdown of students was quite interesting. At one of the sites, School 1, the student population was overwhelmingly Latino. At three of the high schools there was a relatively close number of white students and Latino students. At three of the sites, the three wealthiest of the county's public high schools, the student population was overwhelmingly white.

Overall Findings, Themes

In the course of the research my hypothesis was confirmed in that minority students are graduating at lower rates than their white counterparts. When one look at University of California (UC) eligibility requirements for freshmen, those students who qualify to attend four-year universities right out of high school, minority students were also lagging behind. The trends were especially striking in the more racially segregated schools within the district with School 1 being the biggest culprit of better serving their white population than their minority students.

One of the shocking things that I found in my research was how few African Americans made it through high school qualified to attend four-year colleges. The data was particularly disturbing considering the relatively few total African Americans within the district, one would

assume that because of the small amount of that student base it would be easier to monitor positive achievement. In terms of helping African American students navigate through high school two schools stood above the rest in their ineptitude; School 1, and School 6. At School 6 from 1997 thru 2006 a total of 125 African American freshmen enrolled at the high school. Of the 125 students that passed through School 6 during that time a mere 11 graduated the twelfth grade ready and eligible to attend a four-year college. The numbers translate to 9% of African Americans being UC eligible during that time.

At School 1 the site was different but the results were very similar. During that same time period from 1997 through 2006 a total of 97 African American students were enrolled at School 1. Of those 97 freshmen only eight finished the twelfth grade ready to attend a UC. The eight students that were UC eligible represented 8% of the African Americans during that time period. Although in the spirit of full disclosure School 1 was ahead of the curve when it came to total graduation of African American students.

When it came to looking at Latino graduation rates throughout the district the first thing that I noticed was that Latino students within one of the school district did much better than their peers at the four other schools in the county. Latino students at Schools 3, 4, 5 were two to three times as likely to finish high school and be UC eligible. The graduation rate of Latino students who were also UC eligible from the three aforementioned schools (Schools 3-5) was right around 33%. Although those rates of UC eligibility were lower than white students at the same schools the number was much higher than the roughly 12% of Latino students who qualified for UC enrollment at the other four schools within the county. Once again School 6 and School 1 brought up the rear in terms of minority graduation rates. Only 11% of School 6 Latino students

were UC eligible after their twelfth grade year. School 1 finished with 9% or less than one in ten students who were eligible for UC enrollment.

When accounting for strictly graduation rates without considering student UC eligibility the landscape change. School 5 still graduates the most of its Latino students of any of the schools within the county at 83%. School 1 continues to lag behind the rest of the schools as it is nearly a coin flip as to whether a Latino student entering high school will finish (52% graduation rate). The biggest surprise was to see how large a percentage of School 3 Latino students do not graduate, especially when one considers that those who finish are likely to be UC eligible. Why did these students at School 3 slip through the cracks? What happened to them after high school? Among white students within the district, the graduation rate ranged from 78-88%. School 2 had the best graduation numbers, although the much-maligned School 1 was close behind in graduation percentage. The district that houses School 3, 4, 5 once again had the highest percentage of students graduate with UC eligibility.

What was not immediately clear from the research was why the district had the greatest success in getting students eligible for four-year college institutions. I am suspicious that economic stability is the largest factor. The total enrollment of white students within the district was something that also surfaced during the research. Although whites make up only 40% of the population in the state of California in all high schools in the county, with the exception of School 1, white students were the overwhelming majority of students at the school. The two most segregated schools in terms of white enrollment were School 3 and School 5. At School 3 for example the overall white enrollment from 1997 until 2006 was 2099 students.

During that same time period there was a total of 165 Latino and African Americans enrolled at the high school. Not surprisingly the areas in which School 3 and 5 are located are in the most expensive area of the county based on median home price in the area.

Chapter 5 Discussion /Analysis

Summary of Major Findings

This research shows that minority students are dropping out of high school at a higher rate than their white counterparts. This fact is consistent with the trends around the state and the country where minority graduation rates are lower on the average. Another important finding in the research was that the minority students who are able to navigate through high school are still finding themselves ineligible for four-year colleges based on the classes that they took in high school. White students within this specific county are between two and five times as likely to be eligible for four year college at the end of their twelfth grade year.

Comparison of Findings to Previous Research

Much of the research data collected is substantiated in the previous literature. Nowhere is that clearer than in the literature on segregated schools (Oakes, 2004). In that article one sees the problems that are associated with racially segregated schools. That article was important when I looked at the problems that School 1 was having when it came to graduating Latino students. The graduation numbers at School 1 were the lowest in the county for Latino student's percentage wise. This was significant because there was also the greatest amount of Latino enrollment at School 1.

Another area in which the previous literature backed up an assumption I had occurred during two informal interviews that I held with Latino high school students within the district. When I asked the students if culturally relevant curriculum would help engage them to a greater degree within the class both instantly said yes. The idea of greater buy in to the lesson if it connects to your background goes back to the work of Gay (2002). Both of the students, who

agreed to be interviewed on the condition of anonymity, believed that teachers were not doing enough to connect to the students' cultures. The feeling that classes were geared towards the history of white students, a complaint that I heard, and which was also brought up in Gay's 2002 study on culturally relevant teaching.

Limitations/Gaps in the Research

One of the biggest limitations that I ran into was sample size. Although I spent a great deal of time on this project, and compiled data from over ten years of students the sample size was still not large enough. The fact that I was only able to look at seven different schools is also a limitation in the data. Perhaps if there had been more schools within the area, the data might have revealed something different.

A research limitation in the research was my lack of access to data from the two private schools within the county. Looking at data, specifically graduation numbers, from those two private schools would have been valuable to see if students at those two schools were being better served than students in the county's seven public high schools. A head to head comparison of the numbers, public versus private would have been another way to observe the compiled data.

The overall quality of the literature that I read in the process of writing this report was helpful in providing an overall picture of student performance in high school. One area in which I would have liked more information was at the district level. Most of the literature that I read either focused at the school level or the national level. An area of question given the research I reviewed is why some districts run efficiently, producing students with good academic indicators and others have a hard time sustaining performance.

Implications for Future Research

One of the ways in which future research might prove insightful would be in the comparison of male and female students. Although I looked at total enrollment of male and female students I did not delve into their graduation numbers due to time constraints within the project. Are male minority students at even greater risk of dropping out than their female counterparts? If so what are the main factors behind this discrepancy?

Another direction for this study could focus on reasons for individual dropouts within the county. Although the previous literature touched on the reasons students dropped out of school there was very little on the factors that led to dropping out within this specific county. Would this particular county have different reasons for student dropout compared to other schools around the country? If so why are the reasons different in this county?

In spite of its limitations, and the areas where this project did not go there was still an important conclusion made from this work. Once again the data indicated that minority students are not doing as well in high school as their white counterparts. There is also the problem of segregated schools, where greater numbers of students are prone to dropping out. This study is a good starting point where future researchers can continue in order to better understand the problem of dropout rates among minority students. The findings in this project once again underscore the importance of finding ways to better serve the county's minority students. From the interviews conducted the most effective, and seemingly easiest, would be to implement a certain degree of culturally relevant curriculum.

Overall Significance of the Literature

This project and report are important because it begins to shed a light on the fact that there is an apparent achievement gap and that it needs to be fixed. Minority students are not being served as

well as they can be in our public schools and there needs to be more done to correct the problem. An open discussion about the gap in graduation rate would be a good start, as well as the idea of including more culturally relevant teaching at least on a trial basis. Although many of the problems facing minority students are of an economic nature and not easily fixed some of the solutions are within our reach. With more attention paid to students, especially when it comes to attendance and being at school, fewer students would slip through the cracks. Dropping out of school is rarely the students' fault and we in education need to find ways to keep students wanting to come back and engaged in what they are doing.

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COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 7- African American

Name of School/Ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total #9th fresh	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	2	1	3	1	2	67	1	33%	0	0
1998-1999	1	2	3	2	1	33	1	33%	1	33
1999-2000	1	4	5	1	4	80	1	20%	0	0
2000-2001	1	7	8	4	4	50	2	25%	2	25
2001-2002	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	100%	0	0
2002-2003	2	8	10	4	6	60	2	20%	2	20
2003-2004	6	6	12	4	8	67	3	25%	1	8
2004-2005	1	5	6	4	2	33	3	50%	1	17
2005-2006	2	8	10	6	4	40	5	50%	1	10
2006-2007	2	2	4							
2007-2008	6	7	13							
2008-2009	3	3	6							
2009-2010	5	2	7							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 1- African American

Name of School/Ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total #9th fresh	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	5	5	10	5	5	50	4	40	1	10
1998-1999	3	7	10	7	3	30	6	60	1	10
1999-2000	7	8	15	12	3	20	10	67	2	13
2000-2001	6	6	12	7	5	42	7	58	0	0
2001-2002	4	7	11	10	1	9	10	91	0	0
2002-2003	7	4	11	5	6	55	3	27	2	18
2003-2004	5	5	10	4	6	60	4	40	0	0
2004-2005	5	4	9	5	4	44	5	56	0	0
2005-2006	6	3	9	7	2	22	5	56	2	22
2006-2007	7	4	11							
2007-2008	3	4	7							
2008-2009	3	3	6							
2009-2010	1	3	4							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 4- African American

Name of School/ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total #9th fres h	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	12	9	21	12	9	43	9	43%	3	14
1998-1999	14	13	27	9	18	67	5	19%	4	15
1999-2000	5	7	12	15	-3	-25	13	108%	2	17
2000-2001	7	5	12	9	3	25	8	67%	1	8
2001-2002	8	6	14	12	2	14	8	57%	4	29
2002-2003	8	9	17	8	9	53	6	35%	2	12
2003-2004	19	16	35	24	11	31	15	43%	9	26
2004-2005	8	9	17	4	13	76	3	18%	1	6
2005-2006	13	18	31	14	17	54	9	29%	5	16
2006-2007	10	11	21							
2007-2008	8	7	15							
2008-2009	7	11	18							
2009-2010	5	12	17							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 2- African American

Name of School/ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total #9th fres h	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	7	4	11	8	3	27	6	55%	2	18
1998-1999	9	4	13	5	8	62	3	23%	2	15
1999-2000	8	12	20	5	15	75	3	15%	2	10
2000-2001	6	4	10	10	0	0	9	90%	1	10
2001-2002	7	6	13	7	6	46	6	46%	1	8
2002-2003	3	5	8	6	2	25	4	50%	2	25
2003-2004	3	2	5	4	1	20	2	40%	2	40
2004-2005	5	3	8	2	6	75	1	12%	1	13
2005-2006	3	3	6	3	3	50	2	33%	1	17
2006-2007	3	4	7							
2007-2008	9	9	18							
2008-2009	3	6	9							
2009-2010	4	3	7							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 5- Latino

Name of School/Ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total # 9th fres h	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	13	7	20	18	2	10	8	40%	10	50
1998-1999	9	6	15	15	0	0	8	53%	7	47
1999-2000	7	6	13	14	-1	-8	11	85%	3	23
2000-2001	6	6	12	10	2	17	7	58%	3	25
2001-2002	6	9	15	14	1	7	10	66%	4	27
2002-2003	7	5	12	7	5	42	4	33%	3	25
2003-2004	14	9	23	18	5	22	10	43%	8	35
2004-2005	10	9	19	11	8	42	4	21%	7	37
2005-2006	12	3	15	14	1	7	8	53%	6	40
2006-2007	9	6	15							
2007-2008	14	12	26							
2008-2009	10	8	18							
2009-2010	14	13	27							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 7- Latino

Name of School/Ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total # 9th fres h	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	8	16	24	14	10	42	14	58%	0	0
1998-1999	8	12	20	22	-2	-10	20	100%	2	10
1999-2000	9	4	13	13	0	0	11	85%	2	15
2000-2001	15	16	31	21	10	32	13	42%	8	26
2001-2002	2	14	16	18	-2	-13	16	100%	2	13
2002-2003	10	23	33	20	13	39	15	45%	5	15
2003-2004	13	18	31	28	3	10	22	69%	6	19
2004-2005	17	22	39	22	17	44	14	36%	8	21
2005-2006	19	24	43	36	7	16	32	74%	4	9
2006-2007	12	19	31							
2007-2008	23	34	57							
2008-2009	27	24	51							
2009-2010	31	32	63							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 1- Latino

Name of School/ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total # 9th fres h	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	46	53	99	72	27	27	64	64%	8	8
1998-1999	40	53	93	58	35	38	53	53%	5	5
1999-2000	63	63	126	83	43	34	78	78%	5	4
2000-2001	59	51	110	77	33	30	62	62%	15	14
2001-2002	66	69	135	69	66	48	57	57%	12	9
2002-2003	70	84	154	61	93	60	51	51%	10	6
2003-2004	56	83	139	72	67	48	55	55%	17	12
2004-2005	64	116	180	71	109	61	56	56%	15	8
2005-2006	84	111	195	78	117	60	57	57%	21	11
2006-2007	85	103	188							
2007-2008	95	122	217							
2008-2009	71	127	198							
2009-2010	85	79	164							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 4- Latino

Name of School/ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total # 9th fres h	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	6	10	16	10	6	38	6	37%	4	25
1998-1999	12	13	25	20	5	20	13	52%	7	28
1999-2000	5	7	12	11	1	8	8	67%	3	25
2000-2001	6	7	13	15	-2	-15	9	69%	6	46
2001-2002	7	10	17	15	2	12	8	47%	7	41
2002-2003	11	9	20	15	5	25	9	45%	6	30
2003-2004	17	11	28	17	11	39	10	36%	7	25
2004-2005	7	5	12	17	-5	-42	13	108%	4	33
2005-2006	13	18	31	24	7	23	11	35%	13	42
2006-2007	5	10	15							
2007-2008	6	4	10							
2008-2009	14	11	25							
2009-2010	8	11	19							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 2- Latino

Name of School/ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total # 9th fresh	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	19	17	36	31	5	14	25	69%	6	17
1998-1999	21	25	46	28	18	39	25	54%	3	7
1999-2000	17	27	44	28	16	36	25	57%	3	7
2000-2001	17	26	43	30	13	30	26	60%	4	9
2001-2002	18	16	34	28	6	18	24	71%	4	12
2002-2003	19	19	38	33	5	13	30	79%	3	8
2003-2004	28	19	47	27	20	43	17	36%	10	21
2004-2005	21	26	47	27	20	43	18	38%	9	19
2005-2006	30	33	63	53	10	16	40	63%	13	21
2006-2007	25	28	53							
2007-2008	35	41	76							
2008-2009	47	52	99							
2009-2010	46	43	89							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 3- White

Name of School/ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total # 9th fresh	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	105	116	221	173	48	22	70	32%	103	47
1998-1999	116	124	240	192	48	20	67	28%	125	52
1999-2000	114	126	240	198	42	18	74	31%	124	52
2000-2001	102	126	228	192	36	16	66	29%	126	55
2001-2002	113	120	233	184	49	21	55	24%	129	55
2002-2003	106	129	235	194	41	17	55	23%	139	59
2003-2004	120	109	229	177	52	23	67	29%	110	48
2004-2005	111	130	241	216	25	10	70	29%	146	61
2005-2006	104	128	232	193	39	17	58	25%	135	58
2006-2007	100	112	212							
2007-2008	109	128	237							
2008-2009	110	124	234							
2009-2010	105	121	226							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 6- White

Name of School/ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total #9th fresh	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	111	114	225	166	59	26	76	34%	90	40
1998-1999	109	115	224	164	60	27	74	33%	90	40
1999-2000	140	132	272	195	77	28	83	31%	112	41
2000-2001	96	104	200	157	43	21	68	34%	89	45
2001-2002	96	107	203	175	28	14	83	41%	92	45
2002-2003	91	111	202	158	44	22	89	44%	69	34
2003-2004	124	105	229	171	58	25	97	42%	74	32
2004-2005	90	87	177	156	21	12	65	37%	91	51
2005-2006	98	107	205	158	47	23	67	33%	91	44
2006-2007	72	125	197							
2007-2008	67	94	161							
2008-2009	113	115	228							
2009-2010	92	97	189							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 5- White

Name of School/ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total #9th fresh	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	158	149	307	250	57	19	62	20%	188	61
1998-1999	159	152	311	262	49	16	59	19%	203	65
1999-2000	150	173	323	247	76	24	83	26%	164	51
2000-2001	175	130	305	234	71	23	55	18%	179	59
2001-2002	148	161	309	252	57	18	35	11%	217	70
2002-2003	164	160	324	269	55	17	49	15%	220	68
2003-2004	166	143	309	269	40	13	45	15%	224	72
2004-2005	172	193	365	291	74	20	46	13%	245	67
2005-2006	142	167	309	285	24	8	66	21%	219	71
2006-2007	138	164	302							
2007-2008	168	152	320							
2008-2009	134	125	259							
2009-2010	138	160	298							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 7- White

Name of School/ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total #9th fres h	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	123	136	259	201	58	22	124	48%	77	29
1998-1999	103	127	230	178	52	23	103	45%	75	33
1999-2000	93	87	180	168	12	6	80	44%	88	49
2000-2001	128	124	252	196	56	22	94	37%	102	40
2001-2002	123	127	250	172	78	31	121	48%	51	20
2002-2003	115	134	249	195	54	22	110	44%	85	34
2003-2004	86	110	196	163	33	17	98	50%	65	33
2004-2005	103	117	220	186	34	15	76	35%	110	50
2005-2006	94	97	191	177	14	7	92	48%	85	45
2006-2007	98	91	189							
2007-2008	87	94	181							
2008-2009	83	65	148							
2009-2010	77	78	155							

COLLEGE READINESS SCORE SHEET

School 1- White

Name of School/ethnicity	# of females	# of males	total #9th fres h	total # of Grads (UC & non-UC)	# of non-grads	% of non-grads	# of grad not eligible for UC	% of grad. Not eligible for UC	# of UC eligible	% of UC eligible
1997-1998	49	40	89	75	14	17	25	28%	50	56
1998-1999	57	60	117	105	12	10	47	40%	58	50
1999-2000	59	47	106	82	24	23	39	37%	43	41
2000-2001	57	56	113	106	7	6	51	45%	55	49
2001-2002	56	51	107	91	16	15	38	36%	53	50
2002-2003	57	63	120	110	10	8	35	29%	75	63
2003-2004	50	45	95	79	16	17	14	15%	65	68
2004-2005	45	78	123	98	25	20	31	25%	67	54
2005-2006	38	60	98	93	5	5	27	28%	66	67
2006-2007	40	49	89							
2007-2008	35	53	88							
2008-2009	27	28	55							
2009-2010	33	29	62							

