



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 2
Issue 3 *Spring*

Article 8

April 1975

Some Implications of Ethnic Disparity in Education for Social Work

Faustine C. Jones
Howard University

Samuel P. Wong
Howard University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Race and Ethnicity Commons, and the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Jones, Faustine C. and Wong, Samuel P. (1975) "Some Implications of Ethnic Disparity in Education for Social Work," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 3 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol2/iss3/8>

This Article is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



SOME IMPLICATIONS OF ETHNIC DISPARITY IN
EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL WORK

Faustine C. Jones and Samuel P. Wong
Institute for the Study of Educational Policy, Howard University

EDUCATIONAL DISPARITY AND THE JUST SOCIETY

The increasing attention to the institutional nature of social problems is a significant emphasis in social work. Many of the personal troubles of individual clients are the products of a social system which operates to keep them in trouble, and an awareness of the institutional nature of social problems is a prerequisite for effective solution of personal troubles (cf. C. Wright Mills, 1959).

Among the social problems in contemporary America, the unequal and unjust treatment of various ethnic and racial groups continues to be a crucial and potentially explosive issue. The basic conclusion in the Kerner Report (1968:203), that "our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white--separate and unequal," is as real today as it was first reported. The troubles experienced by ethnic persons in America are primarily a consequence of their living in an unequal and unjust society.

In an unequal society, some people will fare better than others but all people have the same opportunity in life and they may be able to move into desirable social roles. In an unjust society, some people will fare better than others but all people do not have the same opportunity and not all of them are able to move into desirable social roles.

Social roles in a complex society usually have unequal training requirements and some roles require more years of formal training than others. As an incentive for its members to assume the demanding roles, society graduates its social rewards according to the formal training requirements. Roles requiring many years of formal training generally have a higher reward, e.g., higher income, and roles requiring a few years of formal training, a lower reward. The positive association between training and reward is quite evident in America. In 1968, the annual mean income of men 25 years old and over with an elementary education was \$5,467; with a high school education, \$8,148;

with a college education, \$12,938 (U. S. Statistical Abstract 1971, Table 167). The multiplicity of social roles, their inherently unequal training requirements, and the consequently unequal rewards are partially responsible for the emergence and maintenance of an unequal society (cf. Tumin, 1967).

An unjust society, however, is different from an unequal society. In an unjust society, the opportunity for formal training is not equally available to all segments of the population and one segment is consistently barred from equitable training. The denial of equitable training, the restriction of available social roles, and the consequently limited rewards for the same segment of population are the marks of an unjust society. In America, this segment comprises the people with dark skins.

To construct a just society, a necessary (though not sufficient) condition is the provision of equal opportunity for training for all members in that society. Under the present educational system, American youth has ten to twelve years of compulsory school attendance, and the parity of education among the various ethnic groups at the high school level would provide a firm foundation for building a just society. However, available data on educational achievement of four ethnic groups (White, Black, American Indian, and "Other")*, collected by the U. S. Department of Commerce as part of the 1970 Census of population, show that educational parity at high school level is absent among the ethnic groups. As the completion of a high school education is essential for college attendance, i.e. further training for more desirable social roles, the educational disparity at the high school level has effectively restricted some people from moving into the more desirable social positions. Thus, the task of constructing a just society has hardly begun, and the personal troubles of ethnic persons cannot be solved effectively unless the institutional problems are also resolved.

* Our use of the term "ethnic groups" is more inclusive than its usual connotation of national groups within a racial category (cf. Greeley, 1969) because the available Census data are "prepackaged" in four racial-ethnic categories. As the "Other" category includes essentially and substantially Chinese and Japanese, with a small number of Eskimos and Aleuts, we will label this category "Asian" in our subsequent discussion. Persons of Spanish heritage are not included in our discussion because we do not have data classified according to comparable age-groups and nativity (See U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1970, Subject Reports, Final Report PC (2)-1A, "National Origin and Language"). The data of our paper are drawn from the Census of Population, 1970, Subject Reports, Final Report PC (2)-5B, "Educational Attainment."

In this paper, the concept of "parity in education" will be discussed in three ways:

(1) The equality between the proportion of ethnic high school graduates in an age group and the comparable proportion of ethnic persons in the population. Thus, if the proportion of white high school graduates in the 14-15 age-group is 79% and the proportion of white youth in the 14-15 age-group is also 79%, we can state that educational parity has been achieved for white youth in this age group. If the proportion of high school graduates is more than the comparable proportion in the population for a specific age group, we can state that the high school graduates are over-represented in that age group. If the proportion of high school graduates is less than the comparable proportion in the population for an age group, we can state that the high school graduates are under-represented in that age group.

(2) The equality of proportions of high school graduates in the ethnic groups. Thus, if the proportions of high school graduates are identically 76.4% for Whites, Blacks, American Indians, and Asians in the 25-29 age group, educational parity can be said to have been achieved for that age group.

(3) The equality of median school years among ethnic groups. Thus, if the median school years completed by Whites, Blacks, American Indians, and Asians are identically 12.8 years in the 20-21 age-group, we can state that educational parity has been achieved for the 20-21 year olds in the four ethnic groups.

As Blacks and American Indians are essentially Americans of native parentage, we will delimit our discussion to Americans of native parentage and exclude persons of mixed parentage or foreign birth. This delimitation will provide us a set of more refined data for comparison.

PATTERNS OF EDUCATIONAL DISPARITY

Since population distribution is the criterion for assessing parity in education among the ethnic groups, we shall first present the population distribution of Americans born in this country, of parents who are also born in this country. Table 1 shows the population distribution of Whites, Blacks, American Indians, and Asians in 1970. Among the 14 and 15 year olds, there are 8.3 million people of which 79.2% are White, 13.2% are Black, 0.4% are American Indian, and 0.5% are Asian.

Among the 16 and 17 year olds, there are 7.8 million people of which 79.5% are White, 12.6% are Black, 0.4% are American Indian, and 0.4% are Asian. The population distribution of these ethnic groups at these and other age levels provides the basis for comparing educational parity among them.

Table II presents the distribution of Americans with at least four years of high school education. Among these high school graduates are persons with college education. In the 14-15 age-group, there are 15,000 high school graduates of which 73.1% are White, 13.1% are Black, 0.5% are American Indian, and 0.5% are Asian. In the 16-17 age-group, there are 146,500 graduates of which 73.1% are White, 13.9% are Black, 0.3% are American Indian, and 0.5% are Asian. The proportionate distribution of high school graduates among these ethnic groups at different age levels provides a measure of educational parity among them.

Table III presents the comparison between the proportion of high school graduates and the proportion of available persons at the various age levels for the four ethnic groups. Of all Americans 18 and 19 years old, 79.8% are White. Of all high school graduates 18 and 19 years old, 83.6% are White. In this age group, Whites are over-represented among the population of high school graduates. The comparable proportions for Blacks are 11.9% of the total population and 8.3% of the population of high school graduates; Blacks are under-represented among high school graduates. For the American Indians, the comparable proportions are 0.3% for the total population and 0.2% for the high school graduates. American Indians are also under-represented among the high school graduates. Among Asians, educational parity is achieved in the 18-19 age-group; the proportion of high school graduates is identical with the proportion of Asians in the total population.

It should be noted that while the difference in percentage points between the total population and the population of high school graduates for each ethnic group is often quite small, the real percentage difference at each age level is considerable. For example, among the 18 and 19 year olds, the difference between the White population and the White high school graduates is 3.8 percentage points and the percentage difference is 4.8% ($3.8/79.8$); the difference between the Black population and the Black high school graduates is 3.6 percentage points and the percentage difference is 30.3% ($3.6/11.9$). Among the American Indians, the percentage difference is usually 50% which means only one-half of their population at a particular age level has

TABLE I

PER CENT DISTRIBUTION OF FOUR ETHNIC GROUPS*

AGE GROUP	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN	ASIAN
14-15	8,317,437	79.2	13.2	.4	.5
16-17	7,814,018	79.5	12.6	.4	.4
18-19	7,264,408	79.8	11.9	.3	.5
20-21	6,650,156	79.4	11.3	.4	.5
22-24	9,449,344	79.5	10.2	.4	.4
25-29	13,393,662	77.5	10.2	.4	.4
30-34	11,445,183	73.6	10.6	.4	.3
35-44	23,138,727	68.7	10.1	.3	.2
45-54	23,170,050	64.3	8.8	.2	.1
55-64	18,650,143	60.9	8.5	.2	.1
65-74	12,432,097	57.5	8.3	.2	.1
75 & Over	7,669,072	56.9	6.8	.2	.1

*The percentages do not add up to 100 because persons of mixed parentage and foreign birth are excluded from the table.

Source: Unless noted otherwise, the data for this paper are computed from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1970. Subject Reports. Final Report PC (2)-5B. "Educational Attainment," Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973, pp. 1-3.

TABLE II

PER CENT DISTRIBUTION OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES OF FOUR ETHNIC GROUPS *

AGE GROUP	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN	ASIAN
14-15	15,015	73.1	13.1	.5	.5
16-17	146,547	73.1	13.9	.3	.5
18-19	4,243,405	83.6	8.3	.2	.5
20-21	5,252,302	82.1	8.8	.3	.5
22-24	7,408,216	81.9	7.9	.3	.5
25-29	9,888,823	80.2	7.6	.2	.4
30-34	7,869,041	76.7	7.3	.2	.3
35-44	14,287,094	71.8	6.1	.2	.2
45-54	12,546,664	67.9	4.2	.1	.1
55-64	7,533,705	66.6	3.3	.1	.1
65-74	3,633,294	65.1	2.9	.1	.1
75 & Over	1,849,870	67.1	2.6	.1	.1

*High school graduates include persons with college education. The percentages do not add to 100 because persons of mixed parentage or foreign birth are excluded from the table.

TABLE III

PER CENT COMPARISON OF EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF FOUR ETHNIC GROUPS
WITH THEIR DISTRIBUTION IN THE POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS

AGE GROUP	<u>WHITE</u>		<u>BLACK</u>		<u>AMER. INDIAN</u>		<u>ASIAN</u>	
	TOT. POP.	H. S. GRAD.	TOT. POP.	H. S. GRAD.	TOT. POP.	H. S. GRAD.	TOT. POP.	H. S. GRAD.
14-15	79.2	73.1 (-)*	13.2	13.1 (-)	0.4	0.5 (+)	0.5	0.5
16-17	79.5	73.1 (-)	12.6	13.9 (+)	0.4	0.3 (-)	0.4	0.5 (+)
18-19	79.8	83.6 (+)	11.9	8.3 (-)	0.3	0.2 (-)	0.5	0.5
20-21	79.4	82.1 (+)	11.3	8.8 (-)	0.4	0.3 (-)	0.5	0.5
22-24	79.5	81.9 (+)	10.2	7.9 (-)	0.4	0.3 (-)	0.4	0.5 (+)
25-29	77.5	80.2 (+)	10.2	7.6 (-)	0.4	0.2 (-)	0.4	0.4
30-34	73.6	76.7 (+)	10.6	7.3 (-)	0.4	0.2 (-)	0.3	0.3
35-44	68.7	71.8 (+)	10.1	6.1 (-)	0.3	0.2 (-)	0.2	0.2
45-54	64.3	67.9 (+)	8.8	4.2 (-)	0.2	0.1 (-)	0.1	0.1
55-64	60.9	66.6 (+)	8.5	3.3 (-)	0.2	0.1 (-)	0.1	0.1
65-74	57.5	65.1 (+)	8.3	2.9 (-)	0.2	0.1 (-)	0.1	0.1
75 & Over	56.9	67.1 (+)	6.8	2.6 (-)	0.2	0.1 (-)	0.1	0.1

* (-) Indicates under-representation, (+) indicates over-representation.

Tot. Pop. = Total Population

H. S. Grad. = High School Graduates.

a high school education.

As we examine each ethnic group, we find that Whites are over-represented in the population of high school graduates in almost all the age-groups; the exception is among the 14-17 year olds. Blacks and American Indians, in contrast, are under-represented in all but one age-group, and Asians have attained parity at almost every age level and the exceptions are over-representation among the 16-17 and 22-24 age-groups.

The under-representation of Blacks and American Indians among the population of high school graduates places these ethnic groups at a disadvantage. If all the high school graduates go on to college, Whites and Asians will have an initial edge over the Black and American Indian populations. However, in a recent government report (Monthly Labor Review, September 1974:50), we find the disparity between White and Black high school graduates going on to college ranges from 4 to 30 percentage points prior to 1972. In 1973, 48% White and 35% Black high school graduates went on to college. Thus, the initial disparity in high school graduation and the differential rate of college attendance will ensure a continuing inequality among Whites, Blacks, American Indians, and Asians.

Changing our focus on analysis, we now examine the proportion of high school graduates within each ethnic group at different age levels. Table IV shows that in the 14-15 age-group, there is no difference in the proportion of high school graduates in each ethnic group. In the 16-17 age-group, Blacks and Asians have a slightly higher proportion of high school graduates within their respective populations than Whites or the American Indians. Among Blacks of 16 and 17 years of age, 2.1% are high school graduates; among Asians of similar ages, 2.0% are high school graduates. The comparable percentages for Whites and American Indians are 1.7% and 1.4%, respectively.

These youngest age-groups, 14-17 years old, are made up primarily of people who are not expected to have completed high school, as 18 is the usual (average) age of high school graduation. If a child enters first grade at age six and progresses at the normal rate of one grade per year for twelve years, he will graduate from high school at age 18. Thus, the small proportions of youth in the 14-17 age bracket who have completed high school represent deviations from the norm. We may speculate that these are talented and/or ambitious youth who probably come from supportive families. Also, it is possible that a small proportion graduate at age 17 because of

the month in which they were born, e.g. an individual could graduate from high school in June at age 17 and become 18 years old in July, the following month.

The patterns of apparent educational parity among the four ethnic groups at 16-17 years old are an encouraging sign for the future. The educational gap (or more accurately the differential proportion of high school graduates) among the ethnic groups is quite small, and the continued and increased attention to the educational development of minority students of younger school ages should enable a high proportion of them to complete their high school education and to proceed to post-secondary education. The possibilities for ethnic parity in higher education are present, and the construction of a just society is possible.

At the 18-29 age levels, the proportions of high school graduates among Asians are higher than the comparable proportions among Whites, and the proportion of high school graduates among American Indians is lower than the comparable proportion among Black Americans. Both the American Indians and Blacks have lower proportion of high school graduates than Whites in the under-30 age-groups. The difference in the proportions of high school graduates between Blacks and Whites is about 20 percentage points, between Indians and Whites, 23 to 27 percentage points, both in favor of Whites. The difference between Asians and Whites is two to six percentage points, in favor of Asians. As this age bracket includes people who were born in 1941 or later when increased opportunities for publicly-supported schooling were theoretically available, one would expect to find that most of the 18-29 year olds in the U. S. have completed high school. Table IV shows that only Whites and Asians have reached relatively closer to the goal of "universally" achieving a high school education.

Finally, we examine the question of educational disparity using the data on median school years completed by the four ethnic groups. As the median divides the population into two halves one of which has completed an education below the specific number of school years and the other half has completed an education above the specific number of school years, the median school years completed by a people can be a relative measure of the educational achievement among the ethnic groups.

Table V shows the Asians either match or surpass Whites in the median school years completed among persons below 35 years of age. In the 35 and older age-groups, Asians rank after Whites in median school years completed. Contrastingly, Blacks and American Indians rank after Whites and Asians in educational

TABLE IV
PER CENT OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN FOUR ETHNIC GROUPS

AGE GROUP	WHITE	BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN	ASIAN
14-15	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
16-17	1.7	2.1	1.4	2.0
18-19	61.2	40.7	34.0	67.1
20-21	81.6	61.8	58.2	84.2
22-24	80.7	61.3	57.8	83.0
25-29	76.4	55.2	50.1	78.0
30-34	71.6	47.6	43.6	69.3
35-44	64.5	37.2	34.5	59.8
45-54	57.3	25.5	32.5	43.0
55-64	44.2	15.8	23.3	30.5
65-74	33.0	10.3	14.0	24.1
75 & Over	28.5	9.4	10.6	20.6

TABLE V

MEDIAN SCHOOL YEARS COMPLETED BY FOUR ETHNIC GROUPS

AGE GROUP	WHITE	BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN	ASIAN
14-15	8.5	8.3	8.2	8.6
16-17	10.4	10.2	10.1	10.4
18-19	12.2	11.4	11.1	12.4
20-21	12.8	12.3	12.2	13.0
22-24	12.7	12.3	12.2	12.9
25-29	12.6	12.1	12.0	12.7
30-34	12.5	11.8	11.3	12.5
35-44	12.4	10.8	10.2	12.3
45-54	12.2	9.2	9.7	11.0
55-64	11.2	7.8	8.5	8.9
65-74	9.2	6.4	7.4	8.3
75 & Over	8.8	5.7	6.4	8.0

achievement in every age-group. In the under-45 age-groups, Blacks have a slight edge over American Indians; in the 45 and over age-groups, American Indians fare better than Blacks. This pattern of educational disparity is quite clearly a complement to Table IV, and its presentation here is not only to reiterate the disparity in education among the four ethnic groups but also to highlight the absence of educational opportunity for many people 45 and older.

If a twenty-year interval is accepted as a reasonable time gap between two generations, we can approximate the Americans in the 45-54 age-group as the parents of the 25-29 year olds, and the Americans in the 55-64 age-group as the parents of the 30-34 year olds. Among Whites, the proportion of high school graduates in the 45-54 age-group is more than twice the comparable proportion among Blacks, more than 76% of the comparable proportion among American Indians, and more than 33% of the comparable proportion among Asians (See Table IV). Similarly, a disparity exists in the 55-64 age-group in which the proportion of White high school graduates exceed the Blacks, the Indians, and the Asians by 180%, 90%, and 60%, respectively. In other words, during mid-1910s and 1930s, Whites were disproportionately over-represented among high school graduates. By virtue of their higher educational achievement, these White parents of the Americans in the 25-34 age-group were able to provide the necessary conditions for their children to have a head start in education over the children from other ethnic backgrounds.

The educational deficits of previous generations show that the present educational disparity among the ethnic groups has a historical determinant, and society was primarily responsible for it. The Plessy v. Ferguson decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, for example, made separate schools for Blacks legal in the nation. These separate schools were usually not comparable to schools provided for White children. The Plessy decision was essentially to Blacks' disadvantage from 1896 to 1954 until it was overturned by the Brown v. Topeka decision in 1954. The former decision affected the educational opportunity of at least four generations of Blacks negatively (cf. Bond, 1970). Thus, the construction of a just society requires the provision of not only an equal access to educational opportunities for all ethnic groups at the present time, but also the reparatory efforts for balancing the historical inequality. In the immediate future, both Blacks and American Indians need to have not merely equal representation but over-representation among high school graduates in order to have the resources for further training

for alternate social roles.

OBSTACLES AGAINST EDUCATIONAL PARITY

How do we explain the differences in high school completion rate among the four ethnic groups? What factors explain the Black-White and Indian-White disparities and the apparent parity of Asians and the dominant group? The juxtaposition of the relative educational achievement of four ethnic groups makes it difficult to explain their difference in educational parity in terms of genetic endowment of the races (cf. Fox, 1968; Jones, 1973). A simpler explanation may be found in the social factors which maintain racial-ethnic disparity in education.

Black-White Differences. In 1965, 87% of all Black first graders in public schools attended predominantly Black schools and 80% of White first graders attended predominantly White schools. School segregation and its consequently unequal provision of educational facilities are a key factor for the Black-White disparity in education. Another obstacle against their parity is the higher incompleteness rate among Black high school students. In the 18 and 19 age-group, 60% Blacks in 1970 have not completed four years of high school. In the 20-21 age-group, 38% have not finished four years of high school. In the 22-24 age-group, the incomplete rate is 39%, and in the 25-29 age-group, it is 45% (See Table IV). Thus, over one-third of the Black population 18-29 years old are high school dropouts or push-outs.

Dropouts. Under the compulsory attendance laws, some students are able to leave school at age 16 in most states and at age 17 in a few states. Thus, a Black youth can leave school legally at age 16 or 17 if he feels powerless, alienated, or unwanted in the high school. Sometimes, a Black student drops out of high school because he is unable to read competently enough to experience academic success, or he lacks motivation or the necessary material resources for school attendance (cf. Fantini and Weinstein, 1968; Tannenbaum, 1966). Also, he may drop out to supplement the inadequate family income. Some Black students leave their high school because of their increased awareness of their powerlessness in America and the virulent injustice in society. They feel that opportunities are not available to them even though they may possess a high school diploma. Hence, they quit.

Pushouts. While dropouts leave high school voluntarily, pushouts leave against their own desire. Some public schools have developed insidious practices for pushing out Black students by suspensions and expulsions for relatively minor infractions of school rules. In a desegregated school district, with no private schools available in the community, it is impossible for pushouts to complete a high school education unless their parents move to another community or send the child to some relatives in another city or state. Such push out practices by principals, teachers, and counselors are common in the South but they are not confined to the South. In Prince Georges County, Maryland, for example, Black students are being suspended and expelled from the school system greatly disproportionate to their number in the system (See Washington Post, November 5, 1974 A-1, and November 7, 1974 C-1).

A different kind of push out occurs with Black children who are diagnosed as "handicapped" and are sent home to await special school placements that never come. Victims of these push out practices and dropouts continue to account for the educational disparity today between Blacks and Whites.

The Interrupted. Among the older Black population, many attended segregated schools in the South. In some rural areas, schools were not provided for Blacks beyond the 8th grade. Where schools were available, the school term for Black children was shorter than the school term provided for White children, and often a split-term arrangement was in effect. Blacks attended school in-between the planting, cultivation, and harvesting of crops; schools were closed when the labor of Black children and youth was needed in the fields by White land owners. This educational arrangement was a policy formulated by White superintendents and school boards and foisted upon Black principals, teachers and students. In urban areas, many Black youth had to drop out of school to work to supplement the family income. Therefore, neither rural nor urban Blacks in the older population were able to obtain substantial numbers of high school diplomas (See Bullock, 1970; Bond, 1970).

Indian-White Differences. Historically, the policy of forced assimilation for American Indians since 1871 has included the educational program planning for Indian children and youth. When the Indian child reached school age, the typical pattern was to remove him from his tribal home and place him in a boarding school where the practice of Indian ways and use of Indian languages were forbidden. The boarding school, as a rule, was located geographically far from home and the contacts between the

young and older family and/or tribal members were rare. The curriculum of the schools was a carbon copy of that of the White schools, without any adaptation for the particular needs or interests of the Indians (cf. Marden and Meyer, 1968; McWilliams, 1964).

Under these educational arrangements, Indian youth and their parents and tribal leaders were unhappy but they were powerless to change the circumstances. Many Indian youth left the boarding schools at the earliest possible time to escape the intolerable situation; others turned to alcohol as an alternative to coping with the repression. Moreover, until 1952, it was commonly expected that Indians would remain on the reservations, and what they learned in school was ill-suited for the practical demands of making a living or improving the life on reservations.

The desire of American Indians to maintain their own culture and identity in the face of White opposition leads them to desiring a lesser amount of learning in school which was "White learning" for many decades. It is no wonder, then, that educational achievement among Indians suffered under these circumstances.

Asian-White Differences. Chinese and Japanese, the component groups in the Asian category, possess a long cultural heritage which stresses learning and a traditional family heritage which emphasizes filial obligations and places a high value on education (cf. Petersen, 1971; Kitano, 1969; McWilliams, 1964). Strong family ties coupled with parental discipline have aided the school in U. S. in accomplishing its task since the family values and behaviors reinforced the authority and purpose of the school. Chinese and Japanese children are expected to master academic learning, and they have lived up to the expectation, in general. The accomplishment, however, is achieved in spite of institutional prejudice and discrimination in the past.

It was common for an older Asian to be under-employed or to be employed below his educational qualifications. The deliberate exclusion of Chinese immigrants in the early 1880s after they had made valuable contributions to mining and railroad construction, and the detention of Japanese-Americans in World War II in outrageous violation of their Constitutional rights are some of the glaring incidents of discrimination against the Asians. Little Tokyos and Chinatowns are but exotic slums in America today.

Living in an atmosphere of economic and psychosocial oppression, Asians were somehow able to instill into their younger members the sense for achievement, perhaps as a vindication of the injustices they had experienced. The apparent parity of younger Asians with Whites in educational achievement does not ensure their subsequent equal treatment in society.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

We have suggested that personal troubles of ethnic people are institutional in nature and ethnic disparity in education is one of the institutional problems. The patterns of educational disparity and the obstacles against parity have some implications for America and for social work.

On the individual (micro) level, the awareness of educational disparity among the ethnic groups should enable a social worker to adjust his attitudes toward the ethnic clients and to adapt his practices to meeting their needs. He should also be more cognizant of his own class-specific perspective and practices. The changes in awareness, attitude, and practices can be illustrated as follows. In his dealing with a client who is unable to get a job, a social worker might reason: "My client is unable to get a job because he lacks the skills for the job (and not because he is lazy). He lacks the skills because he is under-educated. He is under-educated because he is Black." In other words, the social worker is more aware of the impact of social forces on his client's trouble. An awareness of the nature of personal troubles among ethnic people and the subsequent changes in attitude toward them requires individual efforts which all social workers can expend without undue difficulties.

On the societal (macro) level, the awareness of the obstacles against educational parity should motivate change in the system of unequal access to educational opportunity. The task is colossal and it requires not merely equal-representation of ethnic people in the educational world at present, but an over-representation of them to compensate for the accumulated deficits in the past. The adjustment of ethnic representation in education is a political and moral question and its answer will affect the lives of millions of people.

As the concern for social welfare is a dominant motif in social work, the construction of a just society in which all people have equal access to educational opportunity is

(or should be) within the professional and personal interests of social workers. Anderson (1974) has rightly suggested that the systems in which a social worker performs his services are as much his clients as the persons with whom he works. A society that continually denies a reasonable life chance to a segment of its population is as much in need of "behavioral modification" as the individual who terrorizes his family. The question is: What can and must be done?

(1) America must continue to work toward equal access to educational opportunities for all people. This means social workers within the educational systems must assert greater efforts in assisting students of minority background to attain their educational goals. The efforts may include keeping the school personnel from pushing students out, helping them to understand the cultural differences of their students; serving as their counselors for minority difficulties; providing financial assistance to needy students; making available tutorial guidance to students; creating a congenial school atmosphere for students to achieve; and assisting their parents to understand the school culture through family-school contacts.

(2) America must commit itself to an uninterrupted program of equitable education so that injustices of the past can be redressed. This means social workers as professionals should apply their influence on state and federal governments for educational policies that are consistent with the principles of justice. They should be active in the policy formulation process, be alert to the impact of changing appropriations in the state and federal budgets on minority students, and guard against the use of minority education as pawns in a political game, e.g. the various attempts in Congress to undermine the enforcement of Civil Rights in schools.

These two tasks do not exhaust the range of necessary remedies, but they are crucial for the achievement of educational parity among ethnic groups. Ethnic disparity in education is certainly not the only institutional social problem, but it may well be the root cause of other social problems. While the relative educational achievement of a people may not be the professional concern of most social workers, it is a key element of ethnic experiences in America. The removal of the obstacles to educational parity will provide a condition in which social workers can be more effective in their professional activities, and the removal of such obstacles should be the professional activities of some social workers. The tasks are urgent for our time. "A mind is a terrible thing to waste!"

References

- Anderson, Delwin
1974 "Practice and Education: A Commentary,"
Social Work, 19 (November): 651-653.
- Bond, Horace Mann
1970 The Education of the Negro in the
American Social Order. New York:
Octagon Books.
- Bullock, Henry Allen
1970 A History of Negro Education in the
South. New York: Praeger.
- Coleman, James S., et al.
1966 Equality of Educational Opportunity.
Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Print-
ing Office.
- Fantini, Mario and Gerald Weinstein
1968 The Disadvantaged: Challenge to
Education. New York: Harper and Row.
- Fox, Robin
1968 "Chinese Have Bigger Brains Than
Whites--Are They Superior?" in Preju-
dice and Race Relations edited by
Raymond W. Mack. Chicago: Quadrangle
Books.
- Greeley, Andrew M.
1969 Why Can't They Be Like Us? New York:
Institute of Human Relations Press.
- Jones, Faustine C.
1973 "The Inequality Controversy," Journal
of Negro Education, Fall: 537-549.
- Kitano, Harry J.L.
1969 Japanese Americans: The Evolution
of a Sub-culture. Englewood Cliffs,
N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- McWilliams, Carey
1964 Brothers Under the Skin. Boston:
Little Brown.

- Marden, Charles F. and Gladys Meyer
1968 Minorities in American Society.
New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Mills, C. Wright
1959 The Sociological Imagination. New
York: Grove Press.
- Peterson, William
1971 Japanese Americans. New York: Random
House.
- Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders
1968 "The Kerner Report." New York:
Bantam Books.
- Tannenbaum, Abraham J.
1966 Dropouts or Diploma. New York:
Teachers College Press, Columbia Uni-
versity.
- Tumin, Melvin M.
1967 Social Stratification: The Forms and
Functions of Inequality. Englewood
Cliff, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
1971 Statistical Abstract of the United
States, 1971. (92nd edition.) Wash-
ington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing
Office.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1970
Subject Reports, Final Report PC (2)-5B,
"Educational Attainment," Washington,
D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office.
- Subject Reports, Final Report PC (2)-1A,
"National Origin and Language," Wash-
ington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing
Office.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
1974 Monthly Review (September). Washington,
D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Washington Post
November 5, 1974.
November 7, 1974.