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ADVOCACY PROJECT

RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION FOR BLACK & HISPANIC CHILDREN

Children are born ready to learn. What they learn in the first few years of life is crucial for the course of their lives. The overwhelming research and evidence demonstrate that high-quality early childhood care and education is a fundamental element of a child's healthy development.

There are a range of childcare programs created by the government to support families with low income, such as childcare subsidies, Head Start and Early Head start, State-funded pre-kindergarten, and Military fee assistance programs. Several types of research reveal that Hispanic children are less likely to be enrolled in preschool or center care compared to the white children, and black children are more likely to be enrolled compared to white and even Hispanic children. On the other hand, the researchers suggest that Black and Hispanic communities have a different approach to childrearing, affecting their early care preferences. Likewise, Hispanic families have an insufficient understanding of the benefits of Early Childhood Education, program eligibility requirements, or enrollment procedures. Besides, the fear of using government assistance programs due to legal immigrant status.

Additionally, some research on United States school funding discloses a disproportionate amount of money granted in its highest percentage to the white districts, in opposition to the non-white districts, reaffirming the persistent racial gap in children's school readiness, quality, and

resources. Nonetheless, despite the complexity of educating young children, and preschool teachers tend to be underpaid and poorly qualified, as a result limiting quality in the Early Childhood Education Programs. Moreover, the enrollment tuition cost is too expensive to afford for low-income families, even if they receive Financial Aid. Most of them still unaffordable, and the option that they depend on is to use government assistance programs like Head Start. However, this program is running with less funding, not offering fair pay to the teachers, and risking the quality of childhood care programs provide to the children. The racial disparities, often resulting from racial segregation, are, in part, responsible for the low quality of care and education performance, provide to children of minorities, Black and Hispanic children.

If we find the most significant problem to these matters, we are led to the analogy of Domino effect or chain reaction, in which the cumulative issues related to the high- quality Early Childhood care and education, specifically disproportional school funding in comparison with white districts and non-white districts. Low paid salaries of Preschool teachers may lower the standard of teaching a high-quality education because teachers may not have certifications or degrees. As a result, all the dominos pieces fall. All these problems point towards intensifying school racial segregation, affecting mainly children of minorities (Black and Hispano children) with a significant educational disadvantage in

It is important emphasize that New York State is not the exception in all these issues. New York has the most segregated School system in the country, including Preschool Programs, Child Care Centers, and Head Start Programs. Last year, Mayor de Blasio appointed Richard Carranza as chancellor of New York City with the priority of desegregating New York Schools, in which black and Hispanic students have access to high-quality education, resources, and opportunities in contrast to white and Asian students. This problem has led to consider eliminating the Specialized

High School Admission Test, since, Black and Hispanic students would have the opportunity to be part of these schools. Nevertheless, this sensitive issue is not over for Mayor de Blasio, Chancellor Carranza, and Council Speaker Johnson. It will continue to move forward in how to address it comprehensively.

These issues require creating policies that invest in, expand, and improve the quality of Early Childhood Education and Care programs. Supervised with transparency in the districts, if it is necessary, and managing equal school funding to establish a special commission in each district that allows the programs to have the necessary resources to offer higher quality education to the children. Also, school funding should offer an equative and fair salary to Preschool teachers, therefore, providing the quality of Early Childhood Programs. Resolving these concerns

in the first years will close the ethnic and racial differences and the gap in school readiness.

Black and Hispanic Families are aware of the educational disadvantages for their children in the early years. For this reason, many of them are getting more involved in how to take action changing the education system by raising their voices and show to the nation that they have rights and their children deserve equal opportunities to succeed in their lives.

Considering Early Childhood Care and Education essential in the racial and ethnic gaps in school readiness are one of the facts that Katherine A. Magnuson and Jane Waldfogel (2005) expose in their article titled “Early Childhood Care and Education: Effects on Ethnic and Racial Gaps in School Readiness.” They argue that there is a difference in school readiness and racial and ethnic differences in children who receive Early Childhood Care and Education and, in the amount, and quality of care. The minority of children, mainly Hispanic children who are less enrolled in assistance programs, and Black children who attend low-quality programs. Furthermore, Early

Childhood Providers have less qualifications constraining the program quality provided to the children in minorities. Indeed, Black and Hispanic children come from low-income families, in which experience discrimination and disadvantage in comparison with white children. The authors point out the issues that persist in the Early Childhood Care and Education enrollment and the quality of the programs for black, Hispanic, and white children. They analyze how early childhood care and education might help to narrow racial and ethnic gaps in school readiness, and they discuss the implications for public policy.

The authors compare rates of enrollment of preschool or center care programs in Black, Hispanic and white children from the October Current Population Survey (CPS) from 1968 to 2000. This research illustrates that 23% of Hispanic children were in preschool compared with 49% and 43% of their black and white peers, respectively.

Magnuson and Waldfogel's (2005) study found the following:

Racial and ethnic differences in enrollment in center care or preschool programs exist for young children in all age groups. As expected, young white children are somewhat less likely to be enrolled in center care or preschool than black children. Black children are more likely than white children to attend center care as their primary arrangement (33% versus 26%) or to attend any center care, whether as a primary or secondary arrangement (40% versus 30%). Again, Hispanic children are the least likely to be in center care (22%). (p. 179)

This percentage reveals that black children are more enroll in ECE programs in comparison to white children because black mothers are employed full time compared to white mothers. At the same time, it shows the economic disadvantage because black and Hispanic children participate in publicly funded preschool programs, such as Head Start Program, meaning that they are not enrolled in the same type of programs in comparison to the white children.

A study by Margaret Burchinal and Debby, Cryer's study, the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes (CQO) revealed the quality of center care received in four states. It included four various measures the quality of care, assessing teachers' interactions, responsiveness to children, and the extent to which the program was child-centered rather than didactic. All measures pointed out that white children experienced higher-quality care than black children. However, the differences were less pronounced for caregivers' responsiveness and sensitivity than for other measures. The difference in a summary measure of quality, which combined these indicators, was about 0.3 of a standard deviation, meaning that it is moderate. According to Magnuson and Waldfogel (2005), "only one-third of Head Start teachers hold four-year college degrees, and experts worry that low pay and low levels of provider education constrain program quality." (p. 172) Promoting the enrollment of racial and ethnic minority children in preschool or center care could be particularly useful in closing Hispanic-white school readiness gaps. Besides, funds might increase the quality of the preschools that black and Hispanic children attend, including Head Start programs.

To sum up, public funding of early education programs would probably be reducing ethnic and racial gaps and school readiness. On the other hand, increasing enrollment may improve the quality of childhood care and education and improving children's test scores. These issues lead us to work for policies that boost the enrollment of Hispanic children in Early Childhood Education Programs, announcing not only in schools but in visible areas like public transportation. Also, write a petition to DOE asking for quality teachers for Early childhood care and education government programs such as Head Start to provide high-quality education.

After several research projects in the District of Columbia Tim Vance's (2014) in his article titled "Giving Hispanic Students a Chance to Succeed from the Start." presents an urgent need to support the Hispanic children in reducing the academic gaps starting from the school's early years and

establish roots to succeed in their school years ahead. The author discusses the facts of the low rate of enrollment of Hispanic Children in ECE programs due to a variety of issues that includes demographic characteristics, familistic cultural beliefs, structural barriers, and informational barriers. These analyses of the researchers in The District of Columbia were a wake up called to realize and evidence the importance to support Hispanic children that require to provide a high-quality Early Care and Education and involves Early Childhood Providers and Policymakers.

Vance's (2014) study found the following:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's recent report, that 63% of Hispanic children do not attend preschool nationally, compared with 51% of black and white children. Even more troubling, research indicates those who speak Spanish as their primary language are least likely to participate in any kind of ECE program. (p. 1)

The demographic characteristics in Hispanic families choose that the mother becomes the first educator of their children because they do not work. However, 44% of Hispanic children in the District have a parent with less than a High School degree, compare to the share of black children is quadruple, which may contribute to lower Hispanic enrollment rates as well.

Hispanic families have a cultural belief in a child's early years. They consider the child's first years an essential time to establish familial bonds and transmit the family's belief system, meaning that the family is where the children learn the family's values in the early years. The education in Hispanic culture includes more than literacy and mathematics; it accentuates respect for adult authorities, rules, and consideration for others. The author evidence that 62% of Hispanic children in the District live with their two parents, related to 26% of black children. Also, Hispanics tend to have more extended family members living in the same home, therefore limits the need for center care.

Vance's (2014) study on the structural barriers, explains the following:

Several American ECE programs are on Anglo values of individualism in which Hispanic parents feel threatening the values they want to instill in their children. According to OSSE's Eligibility Determination Policies for Subsidized Child Care, Hispanic Families do not qualify for the subsidies because the parent or both parents (if it is a two-parent household) must be employed or engaged in a valid qualifying activity for subsidies. (p. 3)

As a consequence, the subsidy program's existing structure discourages Hispanic parents from using childcare, is disproportionate, and it excludes from participation. Indeed, a lack of information was the primary reason Hispanic parents did not enroll their child on pre-kindergarten programs according to a national survey.

The informational barriers to Hispanic parents, especially for recent immigrants, are the concept of ECE is not a norm or is not accessible to everyone because that is what they experience in their countries. Likewise, unfounded fear of legal ramifications may make some undocumented parents hesitant to enroll their children in an ECE program. The statistics in the District of Columbia reveals that 28% of Hispanics between the ages of three and four-years-old do not enroll in ECE programs, compared to 19% of white children and 9% of black children. According to Vance (2014) "As the Hispanic population continues to grow in the District, the quality of educational opportunities available to Hispanic children, from birth through graduation, will have a serious role in determining the future economic and social development in the city." (p. 2)

In Conclusion, the high quality of Early Childhood Education provided to Hispanic children will be fundamental in closing the low academic learning skills gap. This written policy in the District of Columbia is an answer to the urgency to address this issue and determine a successful future and development for the Hispanic children.

The racial gaps persist among white and non-white schools, even high-poverty schools in which funding is not distributed equally among the districts across the country. This is reflected in, Dwyer Gunn (2019) illustrates in her article titled, “Non-white school districts get \$23 billion less funding than white ones.” The author argues that school funding has been shortchanged dramatically, favoring the white districts compared to the non-white districts. Despite this awareness on this issue, the states continue to rely on school funding facing disadvantages for poor districts. Gunn provides in her article detailed information in order to take actions that lead to a changing in the management of school funding in the country.

She stated, “The majority of racially concentrated, non-white districts are also low-income.” Gunn (2019) Indicating that 20% of American students receive education in poor-non-white districts, in comparison to 26% of American students, who attend school in a district, in which 75% are white students and only 5% attend school in a racially concentrated, poor white district.

EdBuild researches, a non-profit that analyzes school funding issues, calculated that racially concentrated non-white districts receive \$11,682 in funding per student, in contrast to \$13,908 for racially concentrated, white districts, meaning non-white school districts receive \$23 billion less than white districts, despite serving the same number of students.

In brief, the disproportional management of school funding across the country is affecting fundamentally low-income students, meaning non-white districts, amplifying the questionable quality of education, school readiness, and racial segregation. In order to make changes in the funding school system, each states parents’ board from non-white districts can write petitions to DOE, chancellors, mayor, governor, and Federal State, requiring establishing new policies that supervise the management school funding. Perhaps, incorporating members of the parents’ board from non-white districts in white districts to make determinations of the equal distribution of

school funding., On the other hand, to organize rallies contacting local news to spread the bias of the school funding management.

As I am immersed in the persistent issue that affect the development and success in the school of the children at early age, I see the necessity to raise my voice and act in the socio-educational advocacy, in which racial and ethnic differences can close, and the high quality can be an access to all the children without racial bias with an equal management of school funding.

As small advocacy action, would be having a meeting with parents of low-income in the community center and go to parents' conference in low-income schools, to expose these problematics raising awareness, and invite them to sign a petition letter to DOE, chancellor, mayor, governor of New York and Federal Government State argument these issues with evidence and requiring an intervention to address these problematics.

As large advocacy action, could be organize a local rally in the Borough Halls around the city, and a national rally contacting diverse low-income districts around the country, and distribute flyers in care centers, preschools, daycares, schools and public transportation about these events. Use the social media creatively to post the issues with arguments and evidence, providing the rally's date and the contact people for any information or questions. Contact local and international news. Make connections with different non-profit organizations, joining forces to advocate for this cause and impulse some solution to these problems. The goal is that the government can write policies.

As an Early Childhood Educator observing several situations of injustice that happen to parents, children, and even myself, I am challenged to act in the benefit of those who do not know how to do it and to raise my voice for those who cannot do it. I have seen parents struggling because they do not have the money to enroll their children in a care center program or preschool. Other parents are suffering because of the low quality of the child care center, in which a mother's child had an accident, and the teacher did not follow a protocol calling the child's mother. The teacher ignored what the mother told her, and the coordinator from the program justified the teacher. Later, the mother found that the teacher was by herself with 12 children, overpassing the ratio 1:6 per age.

This topic impacts my career in many ways preparing myself not only to educate the children in their development or intellectually but also in their critical thinking. This can be taught at an early age with simple activities at school and situations around them. It implies preparing myself to give them an answer, and if I do not know, find the answer for them. Moreover, it implies helping them to grow on this path of life daily, developing all their skills, and impulse their talents.

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