

Abstract

Earning a college education is a major goal that people want to achieve in their life. A higher education is significant because it can facilitate folks to pursue a career that interests and inspires them. When people have the freedom to choose their career, they are more likely to enjoy it. Further, a higher education offers higher income, better employment benefits, and more advancement opportunities. These great benefits that come with higher education tend to be luxurious for certain group of individuals. Studies have showing that 9 in 10 persons enrolled in a program at a college or a university at some point in their life, but very few of them completed their program. This creates a serious wage gap between those with and without a degree. This gap is projected to grow. In fact, a collective study by the Center on Education and Georgetown University found that people who hold a bachelor's degree and work full-time earn 84% more in their lifetime than those with a high school diploma. People with a college education also enjoy other benefits like health and life insurance, both of which lead to a longer lifespan. Thus, when evaluating the return on investment (ROI) for a college education, it is important to look at the big picture. Over a lifetime, those with a degree simply earn more whether that is money, benefits, or both. These great benefits that come with a college education are something that everyone would most likely love to enjoy, but it appears that not everyone can enroll in college to get an education, and certain group of people quite often have a better chance at enrolling in colleges or universities as opposed to others. Recent studies have showing that white folks are more likely to enroll in colleges or universities in the United States and complete their programs compared to African American and other minority groups. Thus, does the higher education system in the United States discriminate against people of color? This project will make attempts to investigate if racial and ethnic disparities exist in our higher education system based on data collected for students that enrolled at the State University of New York by race and ethnicity.

Introduction

To put an end to racial bias that exist in the United States Education System, the Supreme Court issued two historic rulings On June 23, 2003, In *Grutter v. Bollinger et al.* and *Gratz et al. v. Bollinger et al.*, in which the Court found that race can be considered as a factor in higher education admissions if it is not used mechanically. These rulings offer the promise of continued and perhaps increasing racial and ethnic diversity at our nation's top colleges and universities. While the two rulings were major victories for supporters of diversity, each is only a means to an end. The primary goal has never been intended to bring diverse cohorts into colleges and universities. The ultimate goal is a necessary but fail to establish sufficient conditions to educate and graduate students of all races and ethnicities at similar rates, which has always been the main objective. To achieve the main goal, we must increase the number of minority students who are ready to attend college dramatically. In addition, racial and ethnic gaps in college performance and completion must be closed.

Racial and ethnic disparities among college students seems to be a topic that has been greatly neglected by authorities compared to racial disparities in academic success among children and adolescents where numerous studies have been conducted. Recent data released by the National Center for Education Statistics revealed evidence of the need to focus on college completion.

The data report six-year graduation rates of 71% for Asian Americans, 67% for whites, 47% for Latinos, and 46% for African Americans. Graduation rates are substantially higher at selective colleges and universities, but the graduation rates for African Americans came short compared to other ethnic groups. Data collected for a six-year graduation rate in 1989 for students that entered cohort programs at 28 selective schools revealed a 96% graduation rate for Asian Americans, 94% for whites, 90% for Latinos, and 79% for African Americans. Again, African Americans students finished last. These data are disturbing racial and ethnic disparities in college completion for minority students that can contribute to dissatisfaction with their college experiences compared to Asian and White students. The presence of graduation disappointment in minority students makes them less likely to say that they would recommend their college or university to prospective students who are like themselves found in a study.

This is very alarming, so government and public-school officials should address these major concerns because data has revealed that black and brown skin people accounted for a lower share of college graduation than their share of enrollment in several research that reported data. Also, black folks accounted for a lower share of college enrollment than their share of the total population in several different colleges and universities nationally. Therefore, it is imperative to urgently take necessary measures to address and mitigate the effects of racial and ethnic disparities in our higher education enrollment system. This project aims at identifying racial and ethnic disparities in students that enrolled at the State University of New York for several fall terms.

Methods

For many years, the conversation about inequality in higher education has focused on the serious gaps in access for black and Hispanic people. Awareness has also been growing that getting into college is not enough; black and Hispanic students are also much less likely to graduate colleges or universities. Among those students who do graduate from college, there are serious inequities. Studies conducted using federal data have showing that black and Hispanic graduates are far more likely to have attended for-profit colleges and less likely to have attended four-year public or nonprofit institutions compared with white students. In addition, the studies revealed that black and Hispanic graduates generally have attended institutions that have less money to spend on offering a quality education, and they are significantly underrepresented in important fields such as engineering and education, mathematics and statistics, and the physical sciences.

Data from the National Center for Education and Statistics revealed that 59% percent of college enrollees in 2020 were Asian compared to 42% whites, 37% African American, and 36% Hispanics. In Florida for instance, the enrolled student population at the University of Florida, both undergraduate and graduate, is 52.6% White, 17.9% Hispanic or Latino, 7.44% Asian, 5.97% Black or African American, 2.69% two or more races, 0.518% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders, and 0.228% American Indian or Alaska Native. In Florida, African American and Hispanics account for 16% and 23.2 % of the total population respectively compared to 73% white. Georgia is not any different from Florida where Hispanics and African Americans are enrolled at a relatively lower rate in comparison with other ethnic groups. Both ethnic groups account for 12.5% and 12.3% of Georgia's total population, respectively, but the reported

college enrollees for Hispanics is 5.24% while African Americans enrollees account for 8.39%. Florida and Georgia are among the states with the largest African American and Hispanics population.

Similar situations are observed in other states like California, New York, North Carolina, Texas, Illinois, Virginia, Maryland, and Ohio where black and people of color are enrolled in college at a lower rate comparing to other ethnic groups. The pattern and commonality of low enrollment rates among African American and people of color continues state lines, and the common denominator for the low college enrollment rate in all these states is race and ethnic background. Thus, does race disparity exist in higher education? I will make attempts to answer the question in this project.

This project is based on crowd-sourced data on students that enrolled at the State University of New York compile at <https://data.ny.gov/Education/State-University-of-New-York-SUNY-Trends-in-Enroll/ms8i-dzsk>. It is a collection that lists students that enrolled at the State University of New York beginning in fall 2002 that has been reported by the Vital Statistics Administration by categories of race and ethnicity. The collection provides data for students that enrolled at the State University of New York by race and ethnicity. The resource which is a compilation of periodic updates provided by the university officials from throughout the institution attempts to present crucial information in a unified format; most importantly different student race and ethnicity enrollment distribution assigned by the data administrators. It is a csv raw data file that contains data for students that enrolled in the fall terms for several years combined into 5 different ethnicities, and it is the source of data used in this project. Each fall term contains data for about 24000 enrollees. This data published on January 9, 2014 was updated on August 13, 2020, and it is likely to change again prior to the completion of this project since data tend to fluctuate at time.

Results

Table (1) provides a first assessment of the enrollment distributions within each ethnic group. It shows a clear difference between the overall distribution of enrollees from all the different race or ethnic groups. The detail distribution showing in the table suggests that our education system tends to show bias towards certain ethnic group. Students of all race and ethnicities are enrolled in the school, but there is a huge difference in the number of enrollees for each race and ethnicities.

Figures (1 and 2) are two-line charts that shows the trend of enrollments for all the different races. Figure (1) is a step line chart, and figure (2) is a regular line chart. Both figures provide a good, detailed distribution among all the race and ethnicities. They show a higher trend in enrollment for White folks compared to African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and others.

Figure (3) is a bar chart that displays the percentage of the enrollment distribution for all the races and ethnicities for all the students that enrolled at the State University of New. Like figures (1 and 2), figure (3) shows that White folks account for the majority of students that enrolled at the school compared to African Americans that occupy the second place following by Hispanics third, and Asians fourth.

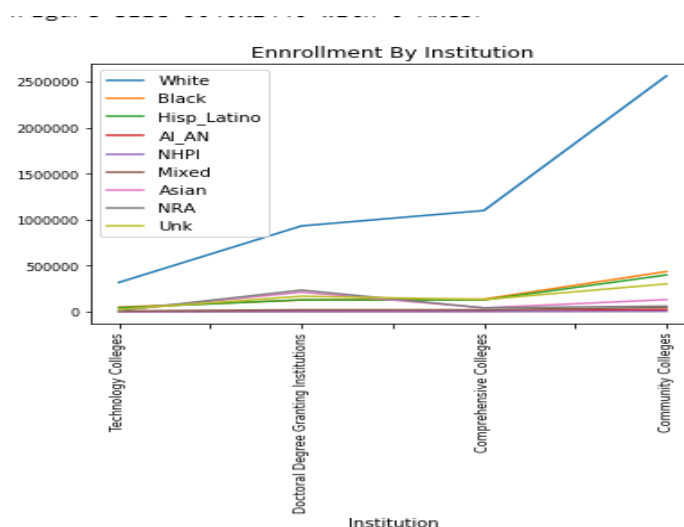
Based on these results, one can make the assumptions that racial inequalities exist in our education system, and the enrollment process shows a huge bias towards white folks.

Revisiting figure (3), it shows that the percentage of white people that enrolled at the State University of New York is about 65% compared to African Americans 9%, Hispanics 8%, and Asians 5%. A critical factor that can help to better understand racial inequalities/disparities is New York's demographics. Taking New York's demographics into perspective, black folks, Hispanic, and Asians account for 22%, 29%, and 11.8% of the total population, but they represent 9%, 6%, and 5% of the college enrollees respectively; whereas White people make up 42.7.% of the total population in New York but account for about 65% of the college enrollees at the state University of New York. Therefore, one can conclude that racial disparities exist in our higher education system.

Table 1

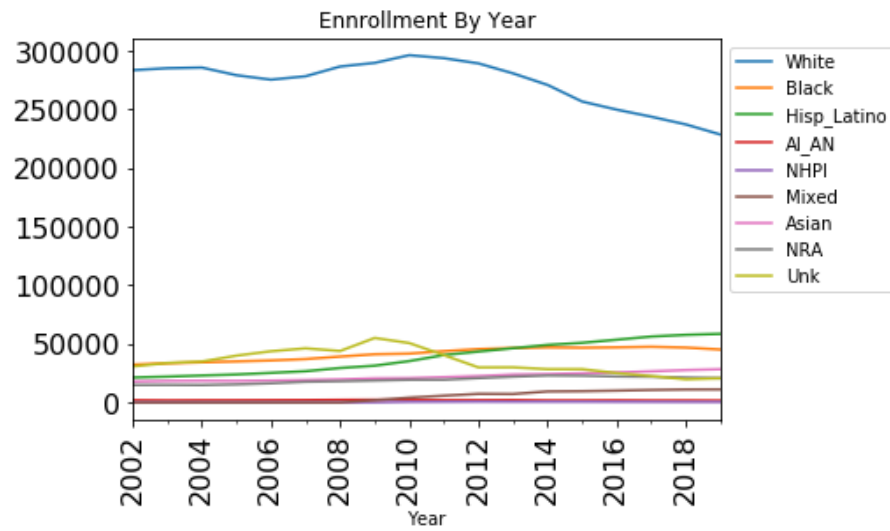
	Term	Institution Sector	Total Enrollment	White	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	American Indian or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Asian	Non-resident Alien	Unknown
0	Fall 2019	Community Colleges	192959	109000	22626	31531	994	255	5243	8386	2607	12317
1	Fall 2019	Comprehensive Colleges	83674	51819	10215	11663	306	88	2293	2893	1635	2762
2	Fall 2019	Doctoral Degree Granting Institutions	112265	51837	9048	11151	220	59	2913	15890	16138	5009
3	Fall 2019	Technology Colleges	26674	16050	3336	4241	121	24	726	1234	351	591
4	Fall 2018	Community Colleges	199873	115352	24025	31057	1106	274	5393	8393	2670	11603

Figure 1



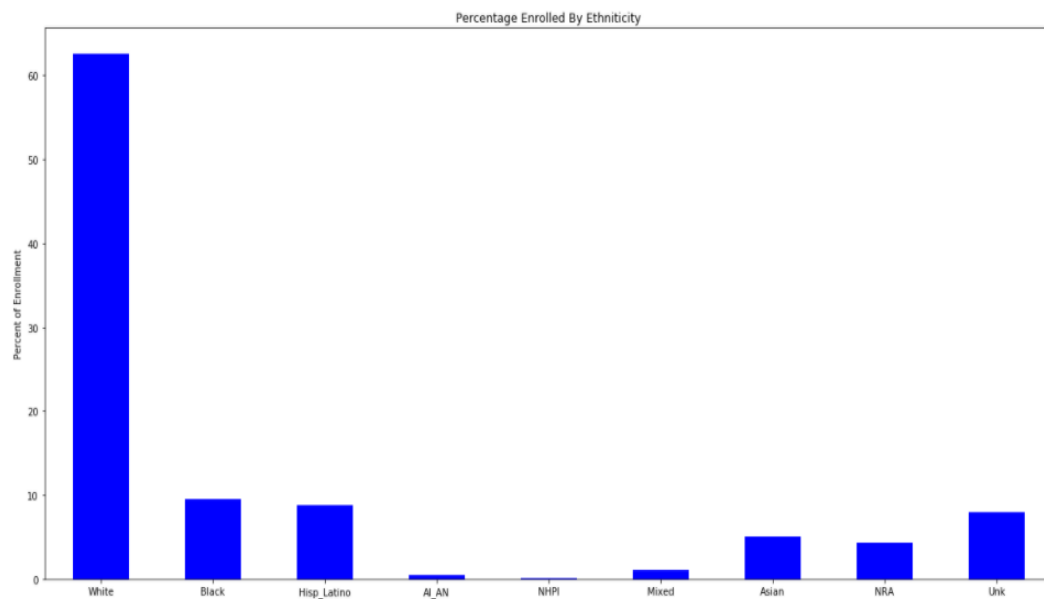
Whites more colleges than other races but have a higher enrollment in Community College.

Figure 2



More whites are enrolled in colleges but seems to be going on a downward trend.

Figure 3



White Enrollment is greater than 65%

Black Enrollment is greater than 9%

Hispanic Enrollment is greater than 8%

Asian Enrollment is around 5%

Discussion

There are many higher education related compilations of data in the public domain emerging from agencies as varied as National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and state governments. College Enrollment by race and ethnicity related study like this is carried out on group specific data where all college enrollees are more or less of the same origin. However, in such a scenario, the race profile differences observed between different ethnic groups would be further confounded by additional factors such as different access to higher education in the general population demographic area, and in some instance bias towards certain race and ethnicity in the enrollment procedures. While other states and jurisdictions have yet to publicly report their data based on race and ethnicity, currently published research data have shown that African American and Hispanic folks in the United States are less prone to enroll in college and earn a college degree as opposed to other race and ethnicity, and a great number of states that report data for college enrollees have showing a shift related to a low enrollment rate towards black and brown people. The main drivers behind this shift are social and economic factors that greatly affect African Americans and Hispanics, which contribute to a low college enrollment rate among them in comparison with other ethnic groups. Therefore, a plan of action is urgently needed to respond to the challenges that black and brown skin folks face in the college enrollment process in The United States and any higher education threats in African American and Hispanics communities because of several factors that affect college enrollment outcomes. A critical tool that can ensure that the college enrollment process is safe for African Americans and Hispanics is fair access to enrollment, which would allow them to receive necessary fair treatment because the embedded racism in the education system and the socioeconomic and enrollment disparities continue to make the college enrollment process worst for black Americans, Hispanics, and other minorities in the USA. Overall, the existing poor college enrollment system for African Americans, Hispanics, and the systematic enrollment disparity are what makes the college enrollment process more challenging to these specific ethnic groups. Bias in college enrollment is not something new. It is deeply rooted in history in the continuous plight of African Americans and brown skin people in this country. This reality is not settled for black and brown people to rely on the same systems that historically inflicted harm and damage on them to protect and serve them against inequalities.

Thus, it is imperative to conduct research that can help understand the roots of low college enrollment rate for African Americans and Hispanics as well as a plan of actions for enrollment outcomes for them nationwide. This can help authorities to better understand their needs, so they can be represented better.

Conclusion

The low college enrollment rate for African Americans and Hispanics observed in several reported data is yet another event showing the racialized higher education inequalities that exist in the USA. The enrollment rates for Black and Hispanic folks are lower compared to other ethnic groups. It appears that African Americans and Hispanics have systematically experienced the worst enrollment outcomes compared with any other racial and ethnic group in the USA. Numerous studies conducted have shown a lower burden of college enrollment for black and

brown skin people among minorities living in The United States where access to quality education and other relevant needs is scarce. Enrollment disparity in our institutions is not new. It is a problem that exists for a long-time in the education system. The findings revealed by several different studies are just a catalyst that significantly highlighted the pre-existing racial inequalities. They signal that the current education system has a huge bias toward certain ethnicity and urgent actions need to be taken to make it fair for everyone.

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